The Second Sergeant 3

Catholick Letter;

OR,

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

Reflecters Defence

OF

Dr. *Stillingfleet's* First Letter to Mr. *G.*

Against the

ANSWER

To the Arguing Part of it.

by Mr. J. Sergeant.

Published with Allowance.

LONDON,

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TO THE
READER.

PErhaps it has ſcarce been ſeen hitherto, that all our Polemical Conteſts were reduc'd within ſo narrow a compaſs. My Firſt Letter inſiſted chiefly on Two ſhort Diſcourſes: Whereof the one undertook to ſhew the Nullity of the Rule of Faith, claim'd by Dr. St. and his Proteſtants. The other the Abſolute Certainty of the Catholic Rule; and the whole Controverſie was, in ſhort, about the Certainty or Uncertainty of Chriſtian Faith. Both of thoſe Diſcourſes were preſum'd by us to be Concluſive; and ſo we offer'd a fair Advantage to our Adverſary, if he could ſhew clearly any of our Propoſitions was falſe, or their Connexion ſlack. Hence I had good hopes that Reply of mine would have brought our Controverſie very near an end, had Dr. St's Return been ſuitable to our Attempts. Eſpecially, it had brought the Buſineſs to a Criſis, had he been pleas'd to ſhew the Abſolute Certainty of his Rule, or of his Faith, as grounded on that Rule, which was juſtly expected. But Error Nonpluſt has already convinc'd the World, That the bringing any Diſpute to Principles or Grounds, agrees not with their Conſtitution who have none. While our Expectations were thus rais'd, no News could we hear of Dr. St. An Anſwer comes out from another hand; not very obliging to him in my opinion, whether he were or were not preacquainted with it: For if he were (and 'tis hard to

imagine that a Piece writ in his Defence had not both his Direction, Inſpection, and Approbation) *People will ſuſpect he foreſaw what would come of it, and was glad the Shame ſhould fall on another*; *and that he has but little Kindneſs for his Friend, whom he ſuffers to Write on this manner. If he were not, they will ſuſpect his Friends have as little Kindneſs for* him, *and leſs Regard, who manage his Cauſe without his Privity. However it be, the Anſwer affords no work for a Replier, but the moſt ungrateful one in the World*; *to be perpetually telling men of their Faults, without the leaſt hopes of doing them good, or contributing to their amendment*; *They being of ſuch a nature, that they are our Adverſaries moſt neceſſary ſupports in their unlucky circumſtances. And indeed, the whole Piece ſeems to have no other Deſign, but to bring the Diſpute into a Wrangle. Yet this Profit may be hoped, that every moderate Judgment will ſee by the very methods we take, which ſide deſires and ſincerely endeavours that* Truth *may appear. It would be much a greater, if* Dr. St. *or whom he pleaſes to employ, would* plainly ſhew *the* * **Abſolute Certainty** *which he* ſays *they* have; *or elſe* plainly confeſs *they* have it not. *But this is not to be hoped. Yet I entreat the Reader, becauſe I diſtruſt my own Credit, to ſollicit him* (*if he thinks it not too dangerous for him*) *to do the one or the other*; *and in doing it, to uſe as much* Reaſon *as he* will, *and as little* Laughing *as he* can. *We are ſufficiently ſatisfy'd of his faculty of* Riſibility, *and would be glad to ſee a touch or two of his* Rationality.

* Second Letter, P. 14.

RE-

REFLECTIONS

ON

Dr. *St*'s Reflecters Defence

Addreſt to Himſelf.

1. I Enquire not, Sir, ſince it concerns me not to know, why you would needs become a Party, or rather an Advocate in a Cauſe, depending between Dr. *St*. and another. If it were *deſir'd* of you, you are to be excus'd, ſo you perform well what you undertook; that is, to *defend* the Dr. eſpecially his *Logick*, and his *Abſolute Certainty*; But if you had nothing to *draw you in*, beſides the Weight of what you had to ſay, I think you might very well have *kept out*. You begin like a man of Art, with prepoſſeſſing your Reader againſt your Adverſary, and in favour of your ſelf: and ſo would have me paſs for a pleaſant, artificial, deluding Companion; and your ſelf for a man, *Godly* even to *ſcruple*, and who cannot barely repeat the Metaphor (of *holding ones Cards*) without * asking *Pardon*. The Reader will find, by your writing, to which of us your former Character is moſt like. In the mean time, I own the Confidence of talking of Self-evidence, and Abſolute Certainty, and Infallibility; and bleſs the Mercy of God, for making me of a Communion, in which

* P. 2.

which that Language is Proper; and humbly pray Him to preſerve me from the *Face* (if I muſt not ſay *Confidence*) of ſetting up for a Guide without them. For, between a *blind Guide*, and one who *ſees not his way*, I think the difference is not great. Much good may your *Modeſty* do you; your *Obſcurity*; your *Uncertainty* and *Fallibility*. If your Conſcience perſwade you theſe are the beſt qualifications of Chriſtan Doctrin, and beſt Security which God would provide for the Souls of men, mine would ſooner uſe Twenty Metaphors, than perſwade People to venture their Eternity upon them. But, at worſt, it is no greater fault in me ſure, than in * Dr. *St.* to talk of *Abſolute Certainty*. Unleſs he perhaps *repent*, and would be content an unfortunate Word inconſiderately blurted out, ſhould be *retracted* for him by *another*, which 'tis not ſo handſome to retract *himſelf*; whereas I, like a man of Confidence, *meant* what I *ſaid*, and *ſtand to it*; and can have no good opinion of thoſe *modeſt* men, that ſay and unſay, as ſuits with the occaſion.

* *Dr. St's firſt Letter*, p. 7. & *ſecond*, p. 14.

2. To fall to our Buſineſs, your Diſcourſe has Three Parts. The Firſt reflects on what I ſaid of turning Proof over from your *Proteſtants* to *Catholicks*: The Second pretends to anſwer my Argument; And the Third, Mr. *G's*. Some *Gleanings* in your Language there are beſides; but this is the main Crop. Upon the firſt Point, ſince Proof does or does not belong to Proteſtants, there is nothing more to be ſaid to purpoſe, but either to ſhew that Proof does not belong to them, or to bring it if it does. But let us ſee how you handle the matter.

3. I had expreſt my ſelf to grieve and wonder there ſhould be ſo little value for Souls among your Party, as to ſend Men to the Tribunal of God, *without furniſhing them with aſſurance that they can juſtifie their Accounts themſelves*.

But

But if (say you) *they may be assured they can give up a good account, may they not be assur'd that they have the Grace of God, and of their Justification and Salvation? And then what becomes of the Council of* Trent? Of what *Account* do you speak, I beseech you? If, as I did, of an Account of *Faith*, I hope you will not perswade us a man cannot know *why he believes*, without knowing whether he be in the State of *Grace*, or *sure* of his Salvation; and therefore, I hope you will not persist to think it *hard to conceive how the bare assurance of the Truth of what is taught, should enable a man to justifie his account, without an Assurance of Grace too*; since his very *Assurance* of the *Truth* which he believes is a *Justification of his Account*, for *believing* it. If you speak of an Account of our *whole lives*, it becomes you huge well to talk of my *Confidence*, who have your self the Confidence to turn things against the plain Scope of my Discourse, against my plain Words, and (I much fear) against your own Knowledge. For where the only Question was of the Certainty of Protestant Faith, or (which is all one) of Christian Faith, upon *your* Protestant Grounds: an Account why your Protestants believe, who cannot tell whether Christ taught it, was the only Account that belongs to that Question. But what needs more? Are not you, I too, fully perswaded, while we are writing this very Controversie, that we maintain the Truth of our Faith by such arguments as can justifie us not to have fail'd of *that* Duty; and if we do so, cannot both us justifie our selves in that particular, and all who assent upon them, to God as well as man? And cannot either of us bring a solid Argument to prove that Christ Taught what we hold, without being assur'd before-hand we are in the state of *Grace*, and shall be *sav'd*? Or, Is this any thing to the *Council of Trent*, as you pretend? What paltring is this then,

P. 3.

P. 4.

then, to pretend, that no Controvertist can bring a Proof that concludes Christ Taught such a Doctrin, and so justifies them that adhere to the Truth it evinces; for fear (forsooth) of making men sure of their *Justification* and *Salvation*, and of contradicting the *Council of Trent*. A pretty fetch, to excuse your selves from bringing any Arguments worth a Straw to justifie your Followers, for believing upon them! Alas! you have store enough of them; but out of pure Conscience (we must think) dare not produce them, for fear of *enabling* your People to *justifie* themselves for not believing rashly; or for fear of making them *sure of their Salvation*.

4. I had alledg'd farther, that till Protestants produce the Grounds which prove their Faith to be *True*, it cannot with Reason be held *Truth*. You put my Discourse first in my Words, only leaving out those which did not please you, and then disguise it in your own, and laugh at it for being *too plainly* True: For *plain Truth*, it seems, is a *ridiculous* thing with you; and you are of opinion, that the more plain it is, that you ought to bring your *Proofs*, the less you are oblig'd to bring them. Thence you start aside to tell us, that *the vulgar* Catholic *has less certainty than the vulgar* Protestant; because the one has only the *Word of his Priest*, the other *has the Word of his Minister and the Word of God in Scripture besides*. Do you think Catholic Priests are at liberty to tell the vulgar what Faith they please, as your Ministers may interpret Scripture as seems best to their Judgment of Discretion! when you cannot but know, they dare not teach them any Faith, but what the Church holds, nor does the Church hold any but upon Tradition! Again, You do well to say your People have it in *Scripture*, or in a *Book*, for they have it no where else. And you know the vulgar *Socinians* and

Presby-

Presbyterians, and all the reſt, have it as much there, as your vulgar *Proteſtants*, notwithſtanding all you have ſaid, or can ſay; and then, I ſuppoſe, you do not think they Truly have the Word of God on their ſide, unleſs you think the Word of God ſays different things to different Hearers. When you prove that you and your Miniſters have any Certain means of making it out, that the Senſe, which by their *explaining* and *catechiſing* they put upon the Written Characters, is *truly* God's *Meaning*, you will do ſomething, make many Converts, and my ſelf one among the reſt: Till then, to poſſeſs your vulgar Proteſtants with a Conceit of having the Word of God, is meerly to delude them. Sure you wanted a Common-place to furniſh out your Paragraph, or elſe writ it in a Dream. For, * to tell me, that *Truth can depend no more* upon the *Saying of a* Romiſh *Prieſt*, *than of an* Engliſh *Miniſter*, when I tell you, it depends *not* on *any* private man's *Sayings*, is not a Reply of a man well awake. In two words, *Bring you Proofs*, ſay I; *the Saying*, that is, the *No-proof of a Miniſter*, is as good as the *No-proof of a Prieſt*, ſay you; And the ſhort and the long is; *No Proof, I thank you.*

* P. 5.

5. But *two things*, ſay you, *follow from my Poſition, which you fear I will not grant. The First is, That if we cannot with Reaſon hold a Truth till the Intrinſical Grounds of it be produc'd, we cannot with reaſon hold any thing for a Truth, namely, becauſe the Church of* Rome *hath determined it; for her Determination is no Intrinſical Ground of the Truth, but only an outward Teſtimony or Declaration of it; and then what's become either of her Infallibility or Authority to command our Faith!* As ſlips of honeſt Ignorance deſerve compaſſion and inſtruction, and I do not know this to be any more, I will be ſo charitable, as to ſet you right. *Authority*, amongſt thoſe who already admit it

Ibid.

for *True*, has Force to prove that to be *Truth*, which depends on it, and will conclude against those who allow its veracity, if it be shewn to be engag'd against them. But it has not this Effect upon *Human* Nature by its proper Power as 'tis meer *Authority*; but, because *Intrinsical Mediums* justifie it to be worthy to be rely'd on. Whence, let that Authority come into dispute, it will lose it's Credit, unless it can be prov'd by *such Mediums* to deserve what it pretends to. And, hence, you see we go about to demonstrate the Infallibility of the Church's *Human Authority*, in deriving down Christian Faith. To clear this farther, I advance this Fundamental Position; *viz. No Authority deserves any Assent farther than Reason gives it to deserve*: And, therefore, without abating any thing of our respect, we may affirm, that the Authority of the whole Catholick Church would be no greater than that of an old Woman, (or one of your sober Enquirers) were there *no more Reason* to be given for believing the *former*, than there is for believing the *later*. And consonantly to this Doctrin, we declare to you, that, When Dr. *St.* comes to argue, either out of Authority of Writers, or Instances depending on their Authority, against Tradition; he shall be prest to make out by *Intrinsical Mediums* they are *Absolutely Certain*; or they shall deservedly be look'd upon and contemn'd as *Inconclusive*. By this time, I hope, you see that *All Truths* are built on *Intrinsical Mediums*; and, that whereas you apprehended they would *overthrow* our Church's Testimony or Authority, such *Mediums* (in case we produce them) are the best means to establish it, and give it force upon our selves and others: As also, how it comes that the Church can *oblige to Belief*: which is not by a dry *commanding our Faith*, as you apprehend; but by having its Human Authority so solidly grounded upon Reason,

that

that it ſelf becomes a Motive able to beget, according to the beſt Maxims of Rational Nature, ſuch an Aſſent in us, to this *matter of Fact*, that Chriſt and his Apoſtles taught ſuch Doctrins. But, what a put off is this? We ſay Truth is not therefore Truth, becauſe of mens bare *Sayings* or *Authority*; and therefore demand your Proofs from *Intrinſical Mediums*, (for thither it muſt come, e're it be known for Truth) to make out what you pretend; Your Anſwer, in effect, is, You are *afraid* to do it, leſt you ſhould deſtroy our Church's Infallibility and Authority. How much is our Church in your Debt, that the Care of Her makes you careleſs of thoſe Souls in your own Church, to whom you owe this ſatisfaction.

6. The ſecond thing you fear I will not grant, is, *A Judgment of Diſcretion to common People*, with which they may *diſcern the Intrinſical Grounds of Truth*. You gave your ſelf at firſt the Character of a ſcrupulous man; and I ſee by this, you have a mind to maintain it. You know, that thoſe who *write* and *print*, can have no deſign their Books ſhould not be *read*; and you know thoſe that *read*, will and muſt *judge* of what they do read; and yet your ſcrupuloſity can *fear* I will not allow the Common People to *judge* of the Intrinſical Grounds of Truth, who take pains they may judge, put it into their power to judge, and out of my own, and ſo cannot hinder them, tho' I would. Indeed, I think it no great ſign of a Judgment of Diſcretion, to pretend to diſcern the *Truth* of Faith, by Lights that do not ſhew it to be *True*; and, upon ſuch a Judgment I wiſh and labour People ſhould not venture their Souls. But I diſallow no other *Judgment of Diſcretion*; full well knowing, that the more Judgment a man has, and the more he uſes it, the ſooner and better he will diſcern, that the Doctrin of Chriſt cannot be ſecurely learnt from thoſe of P. 5.

Your and Dr. *St*'s Principles. But, Why all this? Or, How come I to ſtand in your way? Do I hinder you from ſhewing *Proteſtants* that *They* are Certain of their Faith? *They* allow a Judgment of Diſcretion, if it ſtick there, whether *I* do or no. But you cannot gratifie Catholics with Proof, it ſeems, becauſe they are *againſt* Judgment of Diſcretion; nor Proteſtants, becauſe they are for it; that is, in plain terms, you will not prove the Certainty of your Faith at all. You conclude very con-

* P. 6. formably, that *I *have ſet us all on even Ground*: Yes, moſt Mathematically *even*: For I ſet *Abſolute Certainty* on the one ſide, and *Uncertainty* on the other; and this, in your Language, is *even Ground*.

P. 6. 7. Your next Paragraph ſays, *I fall upon the Certainty of Proteſtant Faith*; which I hope eaſily to *overthrow*. The Reader cannot but apprehend now, that I am making Arguments againſt it, of which you know very well I did not think. Where do I fall upon this Matter! Why, I ſaid, *Suppoſe Mr. G. could not prove Proteſtants are certain, are they therefore certain?* The meaning of which words is clearly this, that the Certainty of Proteſtant Faith muſt depend on their own Proofs for it, not on any Man's being able or not able to prove the contrary, which is what Dr. *St.* would have put upon us. So that (to avoid proving, which was demanded) you put upon me the direct contrary to what I affirm'd, *viz.* That the Certainty of Proteſtant Faith *does* depend upon our not *proving* they have none; whereas I contend it does not depend upon it. What ſhifts are you put to, that you may eſcape this dangerous buſineſs of *proving* your Faith Certain. Well, but did I ſay true, or no? You trouble not your Head with ſuch impertinent thoughts, but fall to propheſie what I *imagin'd*. *This* (ſay you) *he firſt imagins, that all the certainty of our Faith is this, That Papiſts*

piſts cannot prove it to be uncertain, and that *then I make ſport with my own Imagination.* Better and better! Not to take notice of your ſhuffling in, that Papiſts cannot prove Proteſtants are not Certain, which I am very far from *imagining*; becauſe I ſaid our *not-proving* the contrary, is *no* Certainty to Proteſtants, he will have me *imagin* it *is* their Certainty; nay, *All their Certainty:* when he knows I am aware, and confeſs they pretend to Scripture for it; and, *p.* 26. urg'd them to make out they had Abſolute Certainty by *It.* The reſt is, to tell me I play, and you will be ſerious: And your way of being ſerious, when you have choſen to fall upon this Queſtion, whether Proteſtants become Certain by our not proving them Uncertain, is, without ſaying a word to it, to skip to another Paragraph of mine.

8. Where I had ſaid, that *Any man may find it confeſt to his hand, by Proteſtants, that they have no Abſolute Certainty of their Faith:* For which I cited Dr. *Tillotſon.* And you tell me firſt, that Dr. *Tillotſon* is an *excellent man*; and ſo he is; for he excells even your ſelf (which requires a great Talent in your way of handling Controverſie) in all your Arts. Next, to take your turn in *imagining*, you imagin ſingle Dr. *Tillotſon too many for all the Traditionary Catholicks to anſwer his Rule of Faith.* P. 6. And I imagin, that Dr. *Tillotſon* knows the contrary: For I have been inform'd, Dr. *Tillotſon* had the offer of an *Anſwer*, from a Traditionary Catholic long ago, upon condition he would contribute his Credit to get it printed: which he thought not fit to do. Since I perceive you do not know an Anſwer when you ſee it, unleſs the word [*Anſwer*] be in the *Title-page*, I will not tell you it is anſwer'd *already*, tho' I believe I can make it good: But I will venture a fair Wager with you, it will be anſwer'd, in his own Formal way, every jot as ſoon as

Reaſon

Reaſon againſt Railery. Laſtly, You deny that this Confeſſion *That Proteſtants have no Certainty* (no *Abſolute Certainty*, if it pleaſe you) *of their Faith*, is to be found in the pages cited, or any other part of Dr. *Tillotſon*'s Book. If you do not underſtand Engliſh, I cannot help it; but any one that does, may find in the laſt of the pages cited. As far as ſilence gives conſent, it is own'd by Dr. *Tillotſon* himſelf: For it was laid before him by *Reaſon againſt Railery*, and with him it has lain theſe fifteen Years; and yet you would perſwade us *you* ſee it not, *nor I neither, if I may be believ'd againſt my ſelf.*

P. 7.

See *Reaſon againſt Railery*, p. 97. to p. 114.

Ibid.

9. Your Rhetorick, Sir, is very great, if it will do you this piece of Service; but let us hear it however. I had ſaid to Dr. *St.* *p.* 23. *You ſeem to grant you are thus* Abſolutely-Certain *or Infallible, by vertue of Tradition.* Upon which Theme you thus declame. *How? confeſs we have no Certainty* (no *Abſolute Certainty*, I beſeech you again) *and yet ſeem to grant we are Infallible, and that too by Vertue of Tradition. —Some people had need of good Memories.* As if it were ſo ſtrange a thing for Proteſtants to contradict one another, or the ſame man himſelf; or, that there needed Memory to obſerve what paſſes every day. By the favour of your Exclamations, Dr. *St.* did ſay at the Conference, that *They are Abſolutely Certain, that they now hold all the ſame Doctrin that was taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, —by the Divine Revelations contained in the Writings of the New Teſtament; and of thoſe Revelations by the Univerſal Teſtimony of the Chriſtian Church.* And in his Firſt Letter he did deſire Mr. *G.* to *prove that they have no Abſolute Certainty as to the Rule of their Faith, altho' they have a larger and firmer Tradition for it than we can have for the points of Faith in difference.* And Dr. *Tillotſon* did ſay in his *Rule of Faith*, *p.* 118. *We are not infallibly certain that any Book* (ſpeaking of Scrip-

My Firſt Letter, p. 23.

Dr. *St*'s ſecond Letter, p. 14.

Ibid. p. 15.

Dr. *St*'s Firſt Letter, p. 7.

Scripture) *is ſo ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whoſe Name it bears; or, that this is the ſence of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it: It is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe.* Now, if one of thoſe Writers do not ſeem to grant that they are *Abſolutely Certain*, (or Infallible) and that too by vertue of *Tradition*, and the Other confeſs, that they have *no Abſolute Certainty* of their Faith, Engliſh is no intelligible Language in *England*. If you think this a Contradiction, you may talk with your *excellent men* about it, and let me alone; till you can ſhew I talk againſt my ſelf by relating barely what others ſay. Muſt my Memory be blam'd, when their Judgments are in fault? For a Contradiction it is, if *Abſolutely Certain* and *Infallible* be the ſame; which I both prov'd formerly, and it will come into play again e're long. However I only ſaid they *ſeem'd* to grant, *&c.* For the Tenet of *Faiths Uncertainty*, if I may ſpeak what I think, is *hearty* in them; it's *Abſolute Certainty* is but *ſeeming*; and ſurely, 'tis lawful to ſay he *ſeems* to hold it, who in print avows it, whether he do *indeed* hold it or no.

10. From hence you paſs to a company of Traditionary Gentlemen; with whom if you have buſineſs, I have none, and think yours cannot be very great, ſince you take this time to diſpatch it. You may diſpatch with me, if you pleaſe, firſt; and ſay what you will to them afterwards. Dr. *Tillotſon*, you ſay, in his *Rule of Faith, p.* 120. *&c.* ſaid great matters of them, and *if I find them wrong'd, I have the liberty to vindicate them.* I know you would invent twenty impertinent Tasks for me, ſo I would but forget the point in hand, and excuſe you from *proving*. But how careleſs are you of what you ſay. One of thoſe Authors was occaſionally vindicated in the *Letter of Thanks*, and the *notorious Abuſe* of him, made *P.* 7.

good

good againſt that Dr's Excuſe, in *Reaſon againſt Railery*, *p.* 227. to *p.* 234. And were it ſeaſonable, perhaps we ſhould find the others *abus'd* too, or wilfully miſunderſtood. But, What is this to our preſent buſineſs? At laſt, you conclude with a *ſeaſonable Warning*, as you call it; That, *if any Proteſtant ſhall begin to plead Infallibility by Vertue of Tradition, it will behove Catholicks in time to ſeek out a new one.* Why ſo, I beſeech you! This is as much as to ſay, that, as ſoon as Proteſtants take a fancy to any thing that belongs to Catholicks, it is *their own*, and Catholicks muſt preſently yield it up. Your reaſon is, becauſe *When both Parties pretend alike to Infallibility and Tradition, neither of theſe can be any longer a fit Medium to prove which is in the Right.* What will be when both *pretend alike*, we ſhall ſee when the Time comes. But, Why muſt they, or how can they *pretend alike*? Can Tradition infallibly deliver contrary things? Why ſhould *Tradition* be a *Medium* leſs fit to determine between Catholick and Proteſtant, which of them has right to *Infallibility*, when both pretend to it by Tradition, than a *Deed* to determine between *Peter* and *Paul*, which has right to the Eſtate, which both claim by the ſame *Deed*? Do their contrary Pretences hinder it from being ſeen whether the *Deed* be for *Peter* or *Paul*; or *Tradition* for Catholicks or Proteſtants? Or do you think a Proteſtant, to get *Tradition* on his ſide, has no more to do, but to *pretend* to it. At this rate, Scripture cannot be a fit *Medium* for you, becauſe all Hereticks pretend to it, and *alike* too. But it ſeems, that with you, when two pretend, One with Right, the Other without it, they both pretend *alike*, or with equal Title. Of which it was, indeed, *ſeaſonable to warn us*; for neither we, (nor any man well in his wits) would have hit on it of our ſelves. Thus much in return to your preſent Excurſion. But what's become of your

Ibid.

proof

Proof all this while? Instead of bringing that, you tell me, *I talk upon Protestant Certainty*, of which there was not the least shew; that *I speak against my self*; that *Dr. Tillotson is an Excellent man*, that he did not confess, &c. Out of which rambling Talk we are to conclude, That your Protestant Proof needs not appear; but to make us amends for this constant Neglect, you will needs give us a *seasonable Warning*, and that's worth all the Proof in the World.

14. Yet we shall have this Proof, I hope, in the next Paragraph. For you give me notice then, *When your Certainty (Absolute Certainty,* I pray you again for Dr. *Stillingfleet's* sake) *is once prov'd, no more is needful to confute our Infallibility*, and that *you are not afraid to undertake making it good, even All that I here call upon you to prove.* And you do not raise our Expectations sure only to defeat them. Yet it bodes ill, that you would have the word [*Absolutely*] left out a while: A motion which would make a jealous man suspect you had a design to palm a Certainty upon us which will prove *no Certainty*. But you are *Absolute* Master of your own Proofs, and may put in and put out what you please. I, for my part, cannot consent to leave that word out; because it is not *fair* to alter a word of Dr. *St's*; nor *possible*, tho' it were *fair*. For you and I cannot make him *not have said* what he *has said*; and, tho' we should agree to *suppress* that Word amongst our selves, it will still be found in his *Two Letters*, do what we can. But, now we are thus far onward, 'tis pity to break for a single Word; and to give you your due, you begin to deal here very fair with us. *We manifest*, say you. Very well: Now the Business is on the Hinges again; and here is not only *Proof*, but *Manifest Proof* coming. But what is it which you *manifest?* Why, *the Certainty you have of Scripture*; and

P. 8.

1 Ibid.

 that,

that, after this [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] I know not [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

When will the day come, in which you will shew your Faith to be solidly grounded on the Word of God? Every *Article*, as you word it, (to bring it, I suppose, to your solid Endless way of Quoting and Criticizing) is too much at present. We are not got so far yet: It will be time to talk of This or That Article, when This or That Article is in Question. At present, you are to shew, if you can, that *you have any* Means, unless you take *Ours* to ground *any* Article solidly on the Word of God. You are to shew your interpretation of it is *Absolutely Certain*, and that God's Word *means* as you teach it does. Otherwise your Confident Talking will not hinder us from seeing that you wretchedly delude your Followers; while you are your selves truly *Uncertain* whether any thing you teach them be *True*, and Conscious that you *are so*.

13. And yet, tho' you have served us thus, you have a face to lay the blame upon me for being harder to you than the Laws of Disputation. *I will have them*, he says, *prove two things more. For that they are absolutely certain of All This.* By the way I take for granted, that by *All This*, you mean All which Dr. *St.* affirm'd, which was All of which I desir'd *Proof*. And Secondly, *Not only this, but of All that more which Our Saviour taught his Apostles.* Of this Charge I own the first half. I did demand proof of *Absolute Certainty*, and that for *All This*; and shall persist to demand it, till you shew me the Disputation-Law-Book, which allows a Disputant to *say* what he pleases, and *chuse* whether he will *prove* it or no when he has done. Dr. *Stillingfleet* did affirm, that *You are Absolutely Certain*; and, absolutely Certain that *you now hold All the same Doctrin that was Taught by Christ & his Apostles.* And of *All this*, all the Laws of Disputation that I ever read or heard of, warrant me to demand proof:

P. 9

Dr. *St.*'s second Letter, p. 14.

And you shall permit me to believe there was something in the Wind, besides those Laws, which makes you decline to give it. I had been Logician good enough, if you had known how to have *prov'd*. Yes, but I make *Absolutely Certain* and *Infallible* all one. I make them all one! Why, all Mankind made them so before I was born. Take all the Men who pretend to Absolute Certainty, and all the ways by which they pretend; Authority, Demonstration, Sense, Experience, or what you will; and see whether all Mankind agree not, that when there is room for *Deceit*, there is no *Absolute Certainty*; and let a man pretend to be Absolutely Certain as much as he will, if he *be*, or *may be deceiv'd*, he will be but laught at for his pains, and not thought *Absolutely Certain* by any man in the World but by your *Reflecting* self. And yet you would perswade us I break the Laws of Disputation by understanding that Word as every body else does. Certainly you would make a pleasant Law-maker for Disputation. For when you have forbid us to understand words as others do, we could *dispute* no longer, nor so much as *converse*, for there would be no knowing one anothers meaning.

14. But if I take that word *ill*, how must I do to take it *well*? Not to mistake a second time, I would be glad to know how *your self* take it, who to be sure take it *right*. But this you keep to your self; and you have reason, if by *Absolutely Certain* you mean *not Absolutely Certain*, which I suspect is the true case; and must be, unless you would have it mean *nothing*. Otherwise, why might not we know what you will let it mean, if you will not let it mean what I and every body else think it does. Since you leave me to my self, I shall, at the hazard of incurring again the Penalties of your Laws of *Disputation*, venture to think that He, who will not suffer those who are Absolutely

lutely Certain to be *Infallible*, will have them *Fallible*; that is, *Deceivable* in that whereof they are Abſolutely Certain; and for ought they can tell, *actually deceiv'd*. And then he will have Proteſtants believe that their Religion is the ſame that is taught by Chriſt, *ſtand firm*, and *draw over* to it as many as they can, and vex and perſecute their Neighbours whom they *cannot*; prefer it before the Unity of the Church, and keep up differences in Religion with as much jealous Concern, as if the Wall of Diviſion in the Church were the only ſafe Fence of the Nation; in a word, ſtake their Souls and Eternity upon it: When, all the while, he cannot Abſolutely tell whether it be *True* or *No*; nay, *knows* he *cannot*. Let him honeſtly tell Proteſtants ſo; and if they will venture Perſecution, and Schiſm, and Salvation on thoſe terms, the Fault is their own, and he has waſh'd his Hands: Otherwiſe, he deludes them ſhamefully. If they waver, and ſtand upon Security, they are *told*, they are *Abſolutely Certain*, and this *confirms* them; for it is as good Security as Heart can wiſh: But, when it comes to be ſifted, it appears they *may be deceiv'd* for all their Security; and their *Abſolutely-Certain* Religion proves to be ſuch as perhaps is *arrantly Falſe*. In ſhort, they have a bare Sound to rely upon for their Souls. Call their Security *Abſolutely Certain*, and 'tis good *Proteſtant Doctrin*; but call it *Infallible*, (which is the ſame) and 'tis rank *Popery*, and your Proteſtants will none of it. And ſo, they may if they will, and *muſt* if they will continue to be of your principles, be content with Sounds: But, if they will ſtand upon *Security from Deceit*, they muſt look for it where it is to be had: With all they can get here, it remains *They may be Deceiv'd*.

15. The ſecond half of your Charge is purely your own Invention, and as pleaſant an Invention as ever roving

ving Fancy ſuggeſted. *Abſolute Certainty of Proteſtant Faith* was turn'd by Dr. *St.* to *Abſolute Certainty of Scripture*. Since then, Proteſtants believe *more* than that *Scripture* is *Scripture*, I ſaid, they were to prove their Abſolute Certainty of the *more* which they believ'd beſides. You have taken ſuch extraordinary pains to miſtake me, as plainly as I expreſs my ſelf, that you fancy *I would have them ſay they are thus certain* of thoſe Points which they *deny* to be in Scripture, and think them to be added by the Council of *Trent*, and which, therefore, they believe *not*. And thoſe Points you underſtand to be the *more* of which I demanded Proof; and ſo by your power in *Reflection*, to deſire Proof of what they *do* believe, is to deſire Proof of what they *do not* believe: Abſolute Certainty of what *is* their Faith, is Abſolute Certainty of what *is not* their Faith; and their *not-Faith* is their *more-Faith*. Ridiculous Folly! To pretend we expected Proteſtants ſhould *prove to us* ſuch Points as they *deny'd*, and our ſelves *held*; whence they could need no Proof *to us*; and if they needed any *to others*, it was certainly *our* proper Duty, not *theirs*, to produce them. Many, when they are hard put to it, have wav'd the conſideration of Shame, but 'tis a ſad thing utterly to renounce Common Senſe too. Yet, what is it you will not do? What abſurd pretences not lay hold of, rather than be brought to this odious and dangerous thing call'd *Proving*? You *reflect* out your Paragraph with the *H. Scripture*, the good men, who penn'd it, with the Primitive Church, and Primitive Creeds, and the Council of *Trent*, and this you call *Reflecting* on my Letter.

16. Yet you ſet a good face on't at parting, and tell us, *You decline no Proof that is incumbent on you*; as if it were not incumbent on you to prove what you ſay.

You

You add, That *we see by this time* — as if there were any thing to be *seen* in all your *Reflections*, but that they decline all Proof, and that with the most aukward shifts in the World, as, Because the Council of *Trent* had made a Declaration concerning Grace, *p.* 3. Because a Minister is as good a man as a Priest, *p.* 4. Because the Infallibility and Authority of the Church of *Rome* might run a Tilque, *p.* 5. Because Catholicks and Protestants hit it not about Judgment of Discretion, *Ibid.* Because Dr. *Tillotson* is an Excellent man, *p.* 6. Because we will not dispense with the word [*Absolute*] which was Dr. *Sh's*, but will needs take it in its natural sense, and not admit of your *no-sense* of it, *Ibid.* These and many other such weighty Reflections have been our chief entertainment; and yet your *scrupulous Modesty* has the Confidence to say *you decline no Proof that is incumbent on you*, when you have *incumb'd* all the while, if that be the word, on nothing but throwing out Baits to draw us from your *incumbent Proof*, to other matters. You talk indeed of *Proof* at last; and that which you say of it, is, That you prove when you prove. Moreover, you blame me for desiring Proof of two things more; whereof One is the very thing your selves have made the point to be prov'd, and the other I never desir'd you to prove at all. With this stuff you face it out, that *You prove Scripture to be the Word of God*; which, if one should put you to it, you cannot; and *every Article of your Faith by the Scripture* (common words, which every Heretick may and does use); when I have been all this while soliciting with all the earnestness I can, to know which way you can prove *any* Article with Absolute Certainty by Scripture; and you will not tell me, and I am sure, cannot. Though you have the Confidence to say you *do it*, yet every body may perceive *you know you cannot*. For your

P. 11.

Ibid.

your very next words are, *Thus we prove we have ſufficient Certainty of our whole Faith*; which is to ſay, You decline Dr. *St's Abſolute Certainty*, nor know of any way to prove more than *ſufficient Certainty*. And this ſufficient Certainty of yours may be *no-Certainty*: For there goes no more to make a thing *ſufficient*, than to make a man content with it. A Yard of Cloth will make a ſufficient Garment for him who is content to go half naked; and a Table without Meat is a ſufficient Meal for him who is contented to faſt. And ſo, as long as you can prevail with your Proteſtants to be content *without Certainty*, you can prove they have Certainty abundantly Sufficient, becauſe *no-Certainty* will *ſuffice*. Marry, if they will inſiſt upon having at leaſt this Sufficient Certainty which you promiſe, I know not how you will do without Weights and Scales to weigh out your Certainty, according to ſeveral mens Exigencies, and make down-weight Sufficient, except they will take your word; for you have no more to give them even for ſo much: But, for *Abſolute True Certainty*, the only Certainty of which Dr. *Stillingfleet* ſpake and I demanded Proof, They muſt abſolutely excuſe you. Poor Proteſtants, to be thus us'd! That *Empty Words* and *ſolemn Outſides*, and *Confident Noiſe*, ſhould be offer'd to them for Truth, and, which is more deplorable, *paſs upon them*! That they ſhould not yet perceive they are but the Stratagems of thoſe *no-principled* men, who impoſe on them, and ſecretly laugh at them for their Eaſineſs; and yet reflect not that they muſt anſwer one day with their ſouls, for ſuffering themſelves to be ſo impos'd upon.

17. From your *Proving* Talent you paſs to your *Anſwering* Talent; and will try to anſwer a Diſcourſe of mine, in which there are but * Five Propoſitions. The Firſt, [*God has left us ſome way to know ſurely what Chriſt and*

* See my firſt Letter, P. 30.

and his Apostles taught.] This you grant to be a *Certain Truth*: and so there is one step of our Journey made. I think you grant the second too, not that you positively say *I or No*; for that is too precise & dull a Method for a Man of your parts: But as *Plain Truth* seems always ridiculous to you; you laugh at it for a foolish Inference, because it is so visibly in the Antecedent. You are not aware I perceive, that your Raillery is Complement. To be contain'd in the Antecedent, which you make the *Fault*, is the *Praise* of an Inference; without which it would indeed be good for nothing, or rather not be at all. For which way can an Inference be *drawn* from an Antecedent, in which *it was not* to be drawn? Would you have us draw Wine out of an empty Cask, or Beer out of a Jars of Oyl. Again, the more we know the thing *is where* we would draw it, the surer our Draught. But you seem to be so little acquainted with Antecedents & Inferences, that 'tis no wonder; by making them your sport, you make your self the sport of those who *do* understand them. In the mean time your laughing is owning that the Inference *is contain'd* in the Antecedent, and therefore *Certain*, as you before own'd the Antecedent was. And so we are another step onwards; and might so forwards without stopping longer, if you could have let my Proposition alone. But, you must needs be wording on't your own way, to shew that either you did not understand it, or that you had a mind to inform us how neatly and dexterously you could *change* and pervert words, as well as *Arguments*. My Words were: *Therefore this way must be such that they who take it, shall arrive by it at the End it was intended for*; *that is, know surely what* Christ *and his Apostles taught*. Your Words which you pretend equivalent to mine, are these: * [*If God has left us a Way to know, then by that Way we may know.*] Pray Sir,

* P. 12.

do

do *You* take my *sence*, or say what I do? Is *shall know* and *can know* all one? I say that they, who take the Way left by God shall, that is, *cannot chuse but know*; as he cannot chuse but draw a *straight Line*, who draws it by a *straight Rule*; and he *cannot chuse* but come to *London* who goes on the *Right Way* thither; If either could miss, provided they *draw* by the *Rule*, and travel on in the *Road*; the *Rule* of the One is not *straight*, nor the *Way* of the other *Right*. And so I make account that the *Way* to know the Faith of *Christ*, is not a *Right Way*, if those who *take* it *can fail* to know their Faith; and therefore not the *Way* left by *God*. You barely say, *we may know* with which it consists *we may not know*; and so, you make us a Way in which they who travel may be always *out of the Way*; which is well enough for a Way of your making; but it is certainly no Way of *God's* making; for it is plainly *no Way*. But leaving this little tryal of your skill, that which you say to my Proposition (unfaltered) if you say any thing is, that 'tis indeed a little *too verbal*, but *yet true*, and so we may go on.

18. You Preface to the Third Proposition with asking, *who I disputed against*? and *why if I would be thought to disputed against you*, I do not use such and such *Terms*? [illegible] Questions. Your own and my Title [illegible] *D.* of *Paul's*; and yet you stand enquiring after the secret again, to ask why I do not use *Terms* to your mind, is to ask why the Dependent does not [illegible] the Pleiades to draw his Answer. [illegible] beholding to you, if you [illegible] you have a better knack at making Arguments [illegible] you shall make none for me, by my consent. But where lyes the Quarrel? You do not sure expect I should write to your liking; and if you think I speak not against you, and your party,

you

you need not trouble your self with what I say. What does not *touch* you, cannot *hurt* you; so you may say *concedo totum*, and rest secure by being unconcern'd. Yet you speak at last, and not till then, to purpose, when you beat the Reader in hand *I pack the Cards*, and *you will play fair*; 'tis *that* must carry the Cause, or nothing. To get the Readers Affection on his side much imports *him*, who has nothing but such little Rhetorical tricks to trust to. P. 13.

19. But, as if I had not the gift of Prophesy to foresee with what a kind of Man I should have to do, I happen'd to *propose* first what I intended to *prove*, before I went about to *prove* it, which I thought was the clearest way. You at a venture take what comes first, and tho' you saw it was my Conclusion which I infer'd from the following Proposition, will needs speak to *it* before you speak to the Premises. This has so blunder'd all things, that the Reader will not easily perceive what we are doing. I shall therefore, (as you should have done) mind only the *Proof* here, and reserve the *Inference* till we come to the place where I made it. I put then to be prov'd that [*Scripture's Letter interpretable by private Judgements is not that Way*] viz. *the Way left by* God; and for my proof that [*the experienc'd* Presbyterians *and* Socinians, *for example, both take that Way* [of private Interpretation] viz. *and yet differ in such high Fundamentals as the* Trinity *and* Godhead *of* Christ.]

20. You, before you answer, would have it thought you might *ridicule* me in *my own Language*. Never spare me, good Sir, nor balk your mirth for me if I give a just Occasion: But where lies the Jest? Why, I quarrell'd with *Dr. St.* for bringing an instance, and now bring one my self: If this be all, I shall be tempted to be merry in my turn. I told *Dr. St. he might undoubtedly have produc't his Instance if he had been arguing*, but minded him that My First Letter, p. 10.

his turn was then to *Answer*, and that his *Instance* was not an *Answer* to your *Argument*. And yet this is not plain enough for you to see that I faulted not the *Instance*, but the unreasonable *Argument*, as I should any other in such circumstances; and you would have it *ridiculous* in me who *am arguing* to do what I only excepted against, because he *was not arguing*; and freely acknowledg'd he might do, if he had been to argue. Sure you were in a pleasant humour, when you thought of turning me into *ridicule*, because your self understood not where the stress lay, tho' it were never so plainly told you. But to *let this pass*, as you say, with your cautelously sneaking Reflections upon Scripture and Tradition, what say you to the Proof I bring?

P. 15. 21. Why, *the force* of my *Argument* (say you) is this: *If any man can baffle and who wrest or misinterpret Scripture, then can it not be the Way to know what Christ and his Apostles taught*. A right thing after another, if it please you. Talk of *the force of my Argument* as much as you will, but, e're you leave the Proposition before you, of the *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*, 'tis but fair to *grant* or *deny* it. I must intreat you too to leave *translating* my Arguments. They are *New* yet, and need *no mending*; when they do, I will be better satisfied of your Skill in the Trade, before I become your Customer. By your next words, rallying against the *Validity of the Consequence*, I guess you grant the *Antecedent*, and so that case being over, we have nothing but the Consequence to mind. The Dispute would fall in more properly under the next Proposition which infers the Consequent; but now I am here, I will hear what you say, before I pass farther. You say then, That *indeed this Argument proves nothing, but that I have no good opinion of the Scripture*. Will this venomous Cant never be left? I think the Scripture too

good

good and too sacred to be abus'd by *wrong* Interpretations, and labour to preserve it from them: You labour to keep it expos'd to that Abuse: Pray, which of us two have a better Opinion and more Reverence for the Scripture? You proceed: *Must a Rule be no good Rule, because some who use it misunderstand it and abuse it?* What may you mean by this? I take my Ruler, and draw a Line by it; Does the Straightness or Crookedness of this Line depend upon my *Understanding*? What is't then you call *Misunderstanding* a Rule? If you make the Letter of Scripture the Rule, and so private Interpreting the *Using* it, or drawing the Line, and the *Sense* the Line drawn; unriddle to us, if you can, how the *Sense* drawn from the *Letter* can any more fail to be *True*, than the *Line* drawn by the *Rule* to be *straight*; and which way that Sense can be *misunderstood*; and how the Rule can be a good Rule if it be us'd, and the Sense to which it is a Rule *be* misunderstood? Or, do you mean perhaps that 'tis with the Scripture as with a Grammar-Rule; where he who understands not what 'tis for a Nominative Case and a Verb to agree, may make false Construction, and yet the Rule be a good Rule. Tho' you should go thither for your Notion of a Rule, we should be but where we were. For, as the *Grammar-Rule*, let it be never so ill understood, will make *good Construction* in case it be *us'd*; so the *Scripture-Rule*, if it be, as you put it, *us'd*, must needs produce *right sense*. But the truth is, a Grammar-Rule is not a Rule till it be *understood*; for he who understands not what 'tis for Cases and Verbs to agree, has *no Rule* to make them agree: And, then, if you will make the Letter of Scripture such a Rule, you will make the Letter first understood to be the Rule of understanding it, and people misunderstand what they understand, and the misunderstood Rule be a Rule, which is only a

Rule

Rule by being understood. In short, turn it which way you will, you will (to borrow an Expression) *have much beholden to the Reader to make Sense of what you say.*

P. 15. 22, You question on; *Must a Way be a wrong Way, because some that take it will not keep it?* Riddle my Riddle again. Pray, who *are* or *can be* those *some* who *take* it and will not *keep* it? As long as they *take* it, they *keep* it, I think; and they keep it not against their Wills sure. He who has no Will to keep it, may when he pleases *go out* of it, but then he does no longer take it, and is none of the *some* of whom the Question speaks, (for they *all* take it) and so we have nothing to do with him. When all is done, the *Will* here is to no more purpose than the *Understanding* before: For he who *takes* the Way, shall certainly arrive at his Journeys end, let him *Will* what he pleases, and the Way must needs be a wrong way if he do not. 'Tis great pity you are not in the right; You would save more men than the *Benefit of their Clergy*: For the Thief in a Cart, upon the Way to *Tyburn*, would never come there if *willing* not to keep that Way would keep him from it. But by affirming that some *take* the Way who yet will not *keep* it, you affirm that some *go* and *do not Take* it. And so Dr. *S.* is well hoop'd up with a Reflecter, who imagins we are talking of one, who only *takes* the Way at first, and afterwards *leaves* it; whereas 'tis plain, the Argument proceeds of such as make the Way their Choice, and persist to follow no other to their lifes End.

Ibid. 23. Lastly, You tell us, that *Till it be prov'd God has left such a Way or Rule, as no man can possibly err out of it, mistake it, or abuse it*, &c. For you must permit me to stop by the way, I am too short breath'd to run over the long period at a loose. But, let you alone to make all sure: You are safe enough if all must go on your side, till

till ſome body prove to you that no man *can* err out of the Way left by God, miſtake or abuſe it; that is, till ſome body prove that *Ways* are *Priſons* out of which there is no eſcaping; or that the man cannot poſſibly fall into *Error* who is out of the Way to *Truth*. As many as leave the Catholick Church, leave the Way left by God; and you, like a right pleaſant man, would have it prov'd, that the thing cannot poſſibly be done which we ſee is done by millions; and would have us, who ſay, they all *do err* and *miſtake*, prove they *cannot*. All this while I a little ſuſpect you *mean* otherwiſe than you *ſay*; and that by your words, *Error*, and *Miſtake*, and *Abuſe* of the Way, you underſtand miſſing the *End* of the *Way*, *Truth*. But let us ſee what you will make of it: What would you have *prov'd* next? Why *That it is not enough that God has left us ſuch a Way or Rule, as men may underſtand and obſerve if they be not wanting to themſelves.* What do you call *being wanting to themſelves*? I underſtand how a man that *will not* travel, or *leaves* a *right* and *takes* a *wrong way*, is *wanting to himſelf*: but he who puts himſelf upon the Way, continues on in it, and changes not his Road, is not wanting to himſelf in any thing I can imagin, which belongs to the *Way*: And the way of this Traveller I maintain againſt you, has not enough to be a *Way*, if it barely *may*, and yet *may not*, bring him to his Journey's End. What will this come to at laſt? Why, till theſe things be prov'd, *It will not follow, that the Scripture's Letter, in the ſenſe you have own'd it, is not the Way, tho' not only* Presbyterians *and* Socinians, *but the greater number of Mankind ſhould own it, and yet differ about Fundamental Points contain'd in it.* What you call the *Senſe* which you own of the Letter of Scripture, will come by and by. But will not that *follow* which you ſay here *will not*? Will it not follow, that the *Way* by

which

which a man that goes in it comes to *Errour*, is not the Way to *Truth*? Will it not follow, that he who at his Journeys End finds himself at *York*, did not go the Way to *London*? Pray, what's the Way to a Place? Is it not that Passage that he who has past it, finds himself at that Place? And so the Way to know the Doctrin of Christ and his Apostles, is it not the Means which he who has us'd knows that Doctrin? Why then, since *Presbyterians* and *Socinians* both interpret by their private Judgments, and one side *knows not* the Doctrin of Christ, it follows as unavoidably, that the *Way* of private Interpretation is no sure way to know it, as that he who has gone through the *Strand*, and finds himself at *Charing Cross*, has not gone the way to *Moorfields*; That is, as certainly as that *a Way is a Way* or Means to bring a man to such a Place.

24. What do you talk then of *erring* for, and *mistaking* and *abusing* the *Way*? Or what do you mean? 'Tis true, those erring men do mistake the *true* Way, and for that reason *err*. But they mistake not the Way which you say is the *true* Way. They do interpret by their private Judgment, and so *take*, not *mistake* it; *use*, not *abuse* it. Sure you mean that they mistake the Doctrin of Christ; and, so, by mistaking the *Way*, you very *wisely* understand mistaking the *End*. And then, what a man are you to contend their way is a *Way*, and a *sure Way* too, to bring them to the Knowledge of Christ's Doctrin, when they pursue it and are not brought to that Knowledge? And what Eyes have you who perceive not that therefore it cannot be a *sure* way? Again, to what purpose do you tell us that men *may* understand and *observe* (as if *Observing* concern'd our Question of *Knowing*) if they be *not wanting to themselves*? when they who take a *right* Way, not only *may*, but *must*, and cannot possibly fail of coming whither it leads, any more than the man

who

who goes down the *Strand*, or coming to *Charing Cross*; and when men have no more to do with a Way, but to travel in it; and so cannot be *wanting to themselves*, in that respect if they do. Of the same batch is your *misunderstanding* and *not keeping* the Way. As if they who interpret by their private Judgments did *not keep* the Way of interpreting by private Judgments. And tho' their Understandings be none of the best when they take that for the *sure Way* to understand by, yet that very misunderstanding is their understanding it to be the *Way*; and so they, even in your opinion, misunderstand not the *Way*, however they misunderstand *by it*. In fine, you amuse us with a company of *Words*, which have a *Sound*, but either no *sense* at all, or none to purpose: And it remains, that, because a *Way* must bring every one that *takes* it to the *End* of that Way; and private Interpretation does not bring *Sectaries* to the *sure Knowledge of Christs Doctrine*, which is the *End*; that, therefore Private Interpretation of Scripture *is not a* way to know that Doctrine *surely*.

25. And yet you can bear us in hand that this follows *no more* than it follows that because *we see men misinterpret and break good Laws daily, therefore those Laws are Unintelligible, or cannot be kept, and must be thought insufficient to shew them what the Law-giver expects from them.* P. 16. What *breaking* and *keeping* the Laws is brought in for, you best know that bring them in. Our Discourse is only about *knowing* the Doctrin of Faith, and not at all about *Living* up to it; and so has nothing to do with those who *know*, but still *not keep* the Laws, as is the case of most Malefactors. But you end your Discourse well I must needs say, and very suitably to all the rest, with an Instance directly against your self. You see that Laws left to *Private Interpretation* are, by all

Mankind, judg'd *insufficient*, and *publick* Interpreters therefore set up every where; and, from the Parity with them which *are* Insufficient, you conclude the Letter of Scripture *is not* Insufficient. Any body but your self would have made another Use of this Instance. As *God* can write much plainer than Men, when he thinks fit, and has more care of their Salvation than they of their Temporal Concerns; another man would have concluded that *God* did not intend their Salvation should depend on the privately-interpretable Letter of the Divine Law, which he left less plain than Men made the Letter of Humane Laws. But you, it seems, had a mind to make your Discourse all of a piece. The best is, 'tis now ended, & we are free to pass on to the fourth Proposition. To which, because the force of Exceptions against an Inference before it be inferr'd appears not so well, I reserve what you say against it; while I put it only to be prov'd.

26. It is this, *Therefore Scriptures Letter interpretable by private Judgments is not the way left by* God *to know surely what* Christ *and his* Apostles *taught, or surely to arrive at right Faith.* And now I must look to my self, for you pour out here your distinguishing Talent upon me. If, say you, *by Scripture's Letter, he means unsensed Characters, then I confess Scriptures Letter cannot be the Rule or Way.* There is one branch of your Distinction; and so the other, unless you will talk non-sense, must needs be, *Scripture's Letter*, meaning *sensed* Characters, *can be* or *is* the Rule. Your words are, *Yet if he can think it reasonable to allow us much to the* Scripture *as he expects we should allow to this Letter of his, that it contains good sence exprest in words significant and intelligible; we deny his Assumption that Scripture's Letter is not this way.* As you have this Art, among the rest, to talk unintelli-

P. 13.

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gibly, when you have a mind to't, in very plain English, I wish some Body would tell me for you, whether you take *Scripture's Letter* in this period for *unsensed* or *sensed* Characters; for truly I cannot tell my self. By the terms you put [*intelligible*] and [*significant*] one would guess you mean *unsensed Characters*; for [*intelligible*] imports what *may* be understood, but *is not yet*; and [*significant*] what *may be* perceived by the sign, whether it *be* or *no*. And then you have made a fair hand of it with your *fair dealing*, who distinguish the word [*Letter*] into Characters unsensed and Characters *unsensed*; and grant it to be a Rule in *one* of the *two same* meanings, and deny it in the *other*. But you shall talk sense for me, and mean Characters *sensed*; and then lets see how much you have mended the matter. A Character *sensed* signifies a Character with the *sense* joined to it: The *sense* of the Characters of *Scripture* is the sense of *God*, and the sense of *God* is that which *we are to believe*. And, so, Scripture-Characters *sensed*, signify *Faith* it self in conjunction with those Characters. Now *Faith* is the *End* to which we are looking for a *Way* to carry us. To tell us then that *Scripture's Letters* taken for *sensed* Characters is *this way*, is to tell us that the *end* is the *way to it self*; that the means to get Faith is to *have* it first; that, when we know it, we know it; that, when we are at our Journeys *End*, we are in the direct *Road to it*, and such fine things, which would tempt a man not very fond of disputing, to leave it off and betake himself to some other business: For how can you or any think fit to vex poor controversy all your life, when your very sense proves Nonsense? And yet it is not that you have not serv'd a Prentiship long enough in the Mystery: But the best Shoemaker in the world cannot make a good shoe of Bad Leather.

27. Yet, as you are not a man to be discourag'd with

ill success, you are at your Distinctions again; and tell us that, *if by these words*, interpretable by private Judg-
Ibid. ments, *I mean the Scripture may may interpretable; as any private man may possibly wrest the words to make them comply with his own sentiments, or through* Igno-rance, *and Laziness, and* Neglect of *such Helps and* Means *as are fit to be us'd, may* misunderstand *them, I must* have a very bad *Conscience*, &c. As if the Question were about my Conscience. But you would say, I sup-pose that Scripture, so meant, is not the Way, and I say it is not *too*. Pray, what Conscience is yours, if mine
P. 14. be bad when I say as you do? *But if my meaning be, that* Scripture *as it may be understood by a Private Man of a competent Judgment, using such Helps as are proper, is not the Way*, you *again deny* my *Assumption*. Because it would render the Discourse unintelligibly confus'd to re-peat so many lines at every turn, I shall, with your good leave, say in short, *Good* and *Bad* Judgments; under-standing by the *Bad* all the qualifications of the First Branch, and all of your second by the *Good*. I take you then to say that *Scripture's Letter*, as interpretable by *Bad* Judgments *is not* the Way; but, as Interpretable by *Good* Judgments is the Way. By this account three parts in four of Mankind at a modest computation, have *no Way*. For so many *Bad* Judgments there are at least. But, the main Point is, while we are enquiring which the *Way* is which *God has left*, pray what have we to do with the *Judgments of* men? Can they *make* or *unmake* it? Or does it depend on them to be or not be the Way he left, as they happen to be different? It is a *Way* only so long as good Judgments travel in it, and ceases to be a *Way* as soon as Bad Judgments come upon it. A Way, I think, is a *Way*, whether it be beaten by the Lusty or the Lame, the Pur-blind or the Well-sighted. And, so if

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the Letter of Scripture, interpretable by Private Judgments, *be* the Way which God has left us, 'tis not the Goodness or Badness of Private Judgments which can make it *not* the Way. Wherefore, tho' you have chopt upon a Distinction for which we are beholden to you, for we might chance else not to have minded there are Good and Bad Judgments in the World; Yet your Distinction unluckily has no relation at all to the question. Nevertheless, it serves for *Talk* and *Show*, and bids fair to draw us from thinking what 'tis we are about, to wrangling about how much Brains go to a *Competent Judgment*, how much *Pains* to *Diligence*, and such very useful Disputes: which, if you had any, was in likelihood your Design. For sure you cannot but see your self, that your Distinction is no more to our purpose than News from *Hungary* or the *Morea*.

28. Again, your First Branch says that *Bad* Judgments *may* misunderstand the Letter of Scripture, and that it is not the Way to such; which I think is to say, that it is not the Way for that reason; for you do not, and I suppose, will not say that they may not understand it right, if luck serve, let them be never so *Bad*; but, because they *may* misunderstand it, therefore it is not the Way. Why then the very reason you give why it is not the Way in your First branch, bars you from making it a Way in your Second. For all you say of your *competent* and *assisted* Judgment, is, that they *may* understand it *right*, which is not denying, if it be not owning, they *may* likewise understand it *wrong*. And then, you may unriddle to us when you can, how the *Bad* Judgment, which *may* misunderstand it, makes it *no Way*, and the *Good* makes it a Way, which *may* misunderstand it *too*. You are strangely partial to *Good Judgments*, to make the Possibility to misunderstand Scripture's

ture's Letter exclude the Bad and admit the Good; and the Possibility to understand it right, include the Good and shut out the Bad. Thus men *have*, or *have not* a Way as they find favour with you, and as you like their Judgments. As far as I see, your Favour is all in all. For, since you make the Letter of Scripture a Way to Good, but not to Bad Judgments, there is no knowing when it is and when it is *not* the Way, till we know which must pass for Good, and which for Bad Judgments: and so nothing can come of it till we have a Test to try them. Now, I am much afraid that *your own* Judgment is, like *Bayes* his Play, your *only Test*; and that you make account all goes right as long as People think as you do. Marry, if they chance to *dissent* from you, they lose their *Judgments*, or their *Diligence*, or their *Proper Helps*, or something, and stop up their way with their own Faults. There is no doing here without Scales again to weigh out the Brains which go to a *Competent Judgment*, the *Pains* which go to *Diligence*, and the rest. Otherwise, we have lost Scripture; and, for our Comfort, get *your Word* instead of it. For, if Scripture interpretable by a Competent Judgment be our Way, and yours be a Competent Judgment (which no doubt you suppose as your First Principle) 'tis a plain Case that *Your Judgment* is our Way; which in truth is the Sum of all. So long as we will believe as you would have us, we shall have the most magnificent words in the world, for our Souls. We shall all have *Competent Judgments* from *Nature*, and *Proper Helps* from *Grace*. We shall (as many as will stand upon't) have *Absolute Certainty*, nay infinitely greater Certainty than Reason can afford, the Word of God. But, all is to be understood with the condition annext of trusting You for all. Otherwise we have neither *Diligence*, nor *Judgment*, nor *Helps*, nor

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Certainty, nor *Word of God*, nor any thing in the world but *Your Word*; who yet cannot for your life make any three words you say hang handsomely together.

19. But I have stray'd after your Will-o-the-Wisp till I have almost lost sight of our Point. The Question is, *Whether Scripture's Letter uninterpretable by private Judgments* be *the Way left by God*. I maintain it is not; and prove it, because then who take that way err. For, I thought it needed no proving, that *the Way left by God* is not *the Way to Error*. You distinguish twice; First the *Letter* into *Sensed* and *Unsensed* Characters; that is, if you make there any Distinction at all. Now the Proposition is of the Letter *Interpretable*, that is, *not yet Interpreted*, or which has not yet the Sense put to it, and so is yet *unsensed*. When you then distinguish the *Letter Interpretable*, into *Sensed* and *Unsensed*, you make a Distinction, whereof one branch is not comprehended in the Notion to be divided. 'Tis just the same as to distinguish *Learned Men* into *Learned* and *Unlearned*; or *Men* into *Negroes* and *Horses*. Your Second Distinction is, of *Judgments*, into *Competent* and *Incompetent*, which is Twin to the former. I vouch'd for Proof the *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*, men of very *Competent* Judgments; and who are neither *ignorant*, nor *lazy*, nor *negligent*, nor baulk any *means* or *helps*, which they judge can enable them to understand the Letter, or that you have, except that, for a *Spiritual Guide* (which, I suppose, is one of the *Helps*) they in likelihood use the Assistance of some body of their own, not of Your Perswasion. But if one of your Protestant Guides be a *proper* help to your Protestant, a *Socinian* sure is proper to a *Socinian*. In short, they fall under none of your ill Qualifications, and when I speak of *Competent* and *Qualified* Judgments, you distinguish the *Competent* into some which *are* Competent,

petent, and some which *are not* Competent; and, again, the *Qualify'd*, into those which *are*, and those which *are not Qualify'd*. The sum is this, I ask whether the *Unsensed* Letter be the *Way*; and you answer, the *Sensed* Letter is; that is, the *End* is part of the *way* to the End. I propose you *Competent Judgments*, and ask if the Letter be a Way to *Them*, and you reply, it is not a way to the *Incompetent*. And so you, who, good squeamish Gentleman, fall into a Scruple at the very name of *Cards*, can play at *Cross-purposes* all along very freely, even when Souls are at Stake. I desire you to remember that I speak of a Way, which they who *take*, *shall*, and that *surely*, arrive at Christ's Faith. You talk of a *way* by which men so and so qualify'd, *may* arrive at it. As if *may be* were any thing to *shall* and *must be*; or the qualifications of Travellers any thing to the *way*. I * foretold I should have nothing but an unconcerning Return for an Answer: And you have made me, tho' against my will, prophesie; not bating so much of my Prediction as the *scornful Jest*. For there is the *Mountain* and the *Mouse*, and *Reading a Lecture in Logick* to verifie it.

* My First Letter, P. 31.

30. You conclude with an Argument against my Conclusion: *You*, I say, who are *Answering*, and have nothing to do with *Arguing*. But, what would we have? Men who are uneasie will alwaies be shifting places. All our earnest Sollicitations could not wring one Argument out of you when it was your turn to *prove*; and now 'tis your turn to *Answer*, you thrust your Arguments upon us unbidden. Nor is there any keeping you from falling into the same Fault with your *Suppositions*, that Dr. *St.* did with his *Instance*. You *suppose* then 1. *That the Scripture is God's Word*. And so do I too, provided you mean the true Sense of it. For a false Sense, whatever you think, is, in my Judgment, *not God's Word*.

2. That

on *That it was written to be understood.* Undoubtedly; but not by every one, barely by means of the Letter. All Books are written to be understood: Grammar, for Children to understand Construction; Mathematical Books for those who will understand Mathematicks; and yet those Books without Masters will make but few Grammarians or Mathematicians. 3. *That it is written for the Instruction of Private Men.* Yes, but not for the only, or sufficient means of their Instruction, barely by the Letter. 4. *That they are concern'd to understand it.* Yes again; and as much concern'd not to *misunderstand* it. 5. *That they may believe and live as it directs.* They not onely *may*, but *ought*. But, pray remember, that *It* directs no *believing* or *living* according to a *false sense*. 6. *That they have means left them of God for the Understanding of it, so far as it is of necessary concernment to them.* Yes, and that *Absolutely Certain Means*, the publick Interpretation of the Church or *Tradition*. 7. *And that*, using *those Means as they ought they may understand it.* Never mince it with *may*; they *shall* and certainly shall understand it who use those means. From all you conclude at last. *And thus it is to them the way to know surely what Christ and his Apostles taught as necessary to their Salvation.* How! The way to those who use those Means! Why this is just as I say. But what becomes of those who use not those Means? 'Twas ill forgot when your Hand was in at *suppose*, not to *suppose* in amongst the rest, that *Private Interpretation* is the Means left by God for understanding Scripture. For, if *publick Interpretation* be those Means, as it needs must, since I have prov'd that *Private* is not; the Scripture plainly is *no Way* to those who only rely on the *Private* Means to understand it. And your *Protestants* are much beholding to your Argument which shews that Scripture, inter-

preted, as *they* interpret it, by *private Judgment*, is no Way to *them*. And I were very unreasonable if I should take offence at your Challenge, which bids me *shew, when I can, that your Suppositions are Unreasonable or False*. Not I, believe me; For I should be very cross-natur'd to fall out with a man who takes my part.

31. Thus you have *tryd* * as you call it, to answer my Argument; and have succeeded (even in your own Judgment, I guess) very sorrily. For had you been Confident of your performance against it as it is, you would never have thought of *changing* it, as you do here *p.* 17. Men who have put by a Thrust are not solicitous to instruct their Adversary how he *should have* Thrust. And yet you will needs be teaching me, how I should have done *to have made sure work*; that is, to have been sure to hit your Buckler. I mean not to lose time on your Argument. It were ridiculous for me to amuse my self with what never *was* nor *will* be laid by any but your self. No body else would have left out the principal Consideration, *using the Rule*, and, To, coming to Right Faith by *using* it. As if a *Rule* would make a Line of it self, tho' no body draw by it: And a *Way* bring to the Journeys End, even those who travel *not* in it. In a word, your Argument has all the faults of your Answer in short; and onely shews you can speak from the purpose more solemnly and methodically, by way of Syllogism.

* P. 12.

32. After you had thus nobly acquitted your self in answering my short Discourse, you proceed on the same Method to answer Mr. G's Argument for the Infallibility of the Catholick Church. Which, ere I come to examin, I must first say something to your Preliminaries.

33. You doubt whether I think *it needs any Proof that the Church of* Rome *is Infallible*. To those who reflect on

on the force of a vast Human Testimony, attesting notorious *matter of Fact*, and what Assent it claims from Human Nature in parallel occasions, I do indeed judge it does not so much need *Proof* as *Reflection*. But, why should I think it needs no Proof against *You*; who, we see plainly, have *interpreted* your selves out of your Natural Sentiments? Your reason, Sir, because I say *'Tis in vain to talk against one Infallibility, without setting up another.* Now it * has been demonstrated to you, and never yet answered, That *Infallibility* and *Certainty* are the same; and Nature tells us, that *All Discourse supposes something Certain*, otherwise it may run on *endlesly*, and so nothing can ever come to be *concluded*. How is it possible then to *discourse* against Infallibility, or any thing else, without *setting up* and proceeding upon something that is *Certain*, or Infallibly true? By your constant jesting whenever Infallibility comes in the way, you discover your anger against it, because you know you can produce nothing that is truly *Certain*, to ground your Faith. Notwithstanding the vulgar use to say commonly, [*I am infallibly Certain of such a thing*] yet none laughs at them or thinks them extravagant: And must we be afraid to use the same Language in our Controversie, because your *Ears* are so *tender*, or rather your *Grounds* so *soft*, they cannot bear it? If you will needs declare against *Infallible Certainty*, be but so candid as to say still you are *Fallibly Certain*, and see how your Readers will smile at your Folly: And yet you ought to own one or the other, if you be Certain at all; for there can be no *Third* or *Middle* sort of Certainty, which is neither *Fallible* or *Infallible*. Pray speak to this Point, and let's have a little Reason from you at least, and not perpetual Rambling and Shuffling. How can you justifie your selves, that you are not *Deserters of Human Na-*

P. 17.

* Faith Vindicated, P. 37. 38.

ture, by *affirming* (or at least *supposing*) there is no *Infallibility* (that is, *True Certainty*) *to be found amongst Men? Betrayers of Christian Faith*, while you leave it all capable to be a Lye; nay, maintain the full Sense of that wicked Position [*All Christian Faith is possible to be False*] in Discourses directly fram'd for that set-purpose! *Blasphemers of God's Providence*, in declaring and asserting that he has left *less* Certain Grounds for *Faith*, and consequently for the Salvation of Mankind, for which the World was created, and *God* himself *dy'd*, than he has for other things of a trifling importance! Will it expiate for those Crimes, to talk cantingly here of an *Infallible and Living God*, and *his giving us His Word by Men endu'd with an Infallible Spirit*; Sayings fit to take the good Women that are much pleas'd with Godly Talk in a Sermon, but frivolous in our Controversie! Who ever question'd that God was *Living* or *Infallible*; or that *he has left us an Infallible Word*? The only question is, whether you can settle for *others*, or have your *self*, any *Absolutely-Certain* way to know the *Sence* of that *Word*
P. 18. which this Infallible God has left us. You *tell* us indeed *'tis plainly written*: but that's the Question still, and the Point we deny; and for which we are continually demanding your *Proof*, and such a one as may confute our daily Experience, assuring us, that 'tis *not plain* to *Private Judgments*. Yet this only important Point, you only *name*, then slide over it and retreat to your old refuge, that weak insignificant pretence of *Sufficient Certainty*, (by which, I suppose, you mean a Certainty that is neither *Infallible*, nor *Fallible*) and tell your People, if they will take your word against their own experience, the *Plainness* of it (for 'tis that must give them this Security) *secures* them from *being dangerously deceiv'd*; then, as 'tis but fitting, follow again of course

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[*no things necessary to Salvation*] and [*using the Proper helps*] which (as we shall see anon) will cost one's life to peruse; and this you tell us, *encourages them to take pains to be well assur'd of the Truth.* Fine words, I must confess, if they had any Sense! Is it such a rare Encouragement to take pains *to be well assur'd* their Faith is *True*, when you tell them, that after all their pains they can never be satisfied, but it *may be False*; that is, they can never be satisfy'd that it *is* **True**? But, when all's done, and the Certainty of your Grounds fail you, your last refuge is, that *the same Infallible God who has given the Means, has assur'd a Blessing to them that diligently use them.* But this begs the Question: For, if the Rule you follow be not the Means ordain'd by God to arrive at Faith, you have neither the right *Means*, nor can you be assur'd of any *Blessing* by using them; unless you can prove God has promis'd his Assistance to those that use not the *Means* he appointed; or will certainly *direct* those to the *right Place* who take the *wrong Way* to it. Next, you fall into a *Wonderment* to *hear me talk of mens being discourag'd — for want of an Infallible Guide.* And I wonder you should *hear me talk* what I never *spoke.* Not one Syllable was there of a *Guide*: All my Discourse was about an Infallible *Rule.* But the Truth is, you are sick of any Discourse that sifts the Uncertainty of your *Rule*; and therefore car'd not what new pretence you started, nor whether it were a False or True one, so you could but get the Dispute transferr'd to another subject. Yet, upon this false pretence you run on with your Raillery to the end of the Section.

34. But, *at last you have found Infallibility in Tradition, after you have been sent from place to place to seek it.* Pray, Sir, who sent you? We, with whom you are discoursing, never directed you to any other, but to that of *Tradition*: P. 18.

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and you know well, and every Reader sees, we are treating of no Infallibility, but only *that*. Yet you triumph mightily, you have *found* a thing which was proffer'd to you *not sought for*: and found *it at last*, which was both propos'd to you and urg'd upon you *at first*. What an everlasting Trifler are you, to confess to your Reader you have been running after Butterflies all this while, and could not once turn your Eye to the Question which was just before you, nay prest upon you! Well, but what are my * words? [*The Certainty of Scripture is from Tradition.*] Do you deny this? No, you positively assert it, *First Letter, p. 7.* Let's proceed. [*Therefore there is no refusing to admit, that Tradition causes Certainty.*] Do you deny this? How can you without destroying the Certainty of your own Rule [*Scripture*] which depends upon it, and withal contradicting your self? I added, [*And makes Faith as Certain as Scripture.*] Can you deny this? That is, will you affirm the same Vertue does not work the same Effect if the matter be capable? Let's see now how you answer. *Yet it may be this Certainty comes not up to Infallibility.* Yes, it does; for the Certainty here spoken of was *Absolute Certainty*, as was twice insisted on immediately before, from your own words, p. 6. and I * *prov'd* it was the same with *Infallibility* which you have never *disprov'd*; and so, unless you give a better Answer, your own Acknowledgment that Tradition causes *Absolute Certainty*, forces you to grant we are *Infallibly Certain* of our Faith. But say * you, *The* Tradition for Scripture was *more Universal*; Suppose it so, was not Tradition for *Doctrin* large *enough* to cause *Absolute Certainty*! Or, are not ten millions of Attesters as able to cause Absolute Certainty as Twenty? Pray, consider a little the Vertue of *Witnessing Authority*, and the force it has upon Human Nature. When the Num-

*My First Letter, P. 7.

*P. 23.

* P. 19.

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ber comes to that pitch, that it is seen to be impossible they should all be *deceiv'd* in the thing they unanimously attest, or *conspire* to *deceive* us, their Testimony has its full Effect upon us, and begets in us that firm and unalterable Assent we call *Absolute Certainty*; and the Addition of myriads more adds nothing to the *substance* of that Assent, since it was wrought without it. But the main is, you quite misunderstand the nature of a long Successive Testimony. Let ten thousand men witness what *two* or *three*, who were the Original Attestors of a thing, said *at first*, and two thousand more witness in the *next Age* what those ten thousand told them, and so forwards, yet (taking them precisely as *Witnesses*) they amount to no more, in order to prove the *Truth* of that thing, than the Credit of those *two* or *three* First Witnesses goes. 'Tis the *First Source* of a Testimony, which gives the succeeding ones all their weight to prove the Thing that is witnest to be *True*. 'Tis that from which the *Largeness* and *Firmness* of a Testimony, brought to evince the *Truth* of any thing, is to be measured or calculated. Since then the stream of Tradition for Doctrin had for its Source innumerable Multitudes of those Christians in the First Age, in many places of the World, who heard the Apostles preach it, and saw them settle the Practice of it in the respective Churches; but the Original Testifiers that such a *Book* was writ by such or such an Apostle or Evangelist, were *very few* in comparison, sometimes perhaps not past *two* or *three*: It cannot with any shew of Sense be pretended, that the Tradition for the several *Books of Scripture* is in any degree comparable in either regard to the Tradition for *Doctrin*. Your next Answer is, that *This Universal Tradition is no more but Humane Testimony, and that can be no ground for Infallibility which excludes all possibility of Errour.* Pray P. 19.

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why not? If things were so order'd (as indeed they are) that the Teachers could neither be *deceiv'd* in the Doctrin, being bred and brought up to it; nor *conspire to deceive* us, in telling the World in any Age that the new Doctrin they had invented was immediately delivered; then it was not possible any Errour could come in, under the notion of a Doctrin delivered from the beginning. But is not your Tradition for Scripture *Human Testimony* too? And if that can be erroneous, may not all Christian Faith by your Principles be perhaps a company of Lying Stories? You must be [illegible]d by your own words here to confess it; but I dare say, your Parishioners, should you openly avow it, would hate you for the Blasphemy. You would tell them, I doubt not, as you do us, that *Moral Certainty is enough to stand on such a Foundation*: that is, such a Certainty as may *deceive you*, and, by a necessary consequence, may haste to, overturn the whole Fabrick of Christian Faith. In the mean time let's see how manifestly you contradict Dr. *St.* when you should *defend* him. He avow'd * *Absolute Certainty* for the Book of *Scripture*, and this upon the Foundation of *Tradition*; and you tell us here *Tradition* can ground but *Moral Certainty*. Now all the World till you writ, counterdistinguisht *Absolute* and *Moral Certainty*, which you jumble in one. But distinct they ever were, are, and shall be; for the Word [*Moral*] signifies a Diminution or Imperfection of Certainty, and [*Absolute*] plainly expresses the Perfection of it; whence 'tis evident, that either you contradict Dr. *St.* (perhaps not without his private Order) or he himself. We shall have all words shortly lose their signification, for no other reason, but to give you room to shift this way and that, when you are too close prest with Reason.

* First Letter, P. 7.

35. Now, since Dr. *St.* had granted, that Tradition is

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Absolutely Certain for *Scripture*, and I had prov'd that *Absolute Certainty* was the same with *Infallibility*, what should hinder me from inferring, *that unless some special difficulty be found in other things that light into the same channel, it must bring them down infallibly too?* Your Gifts of Interpretation expounds these Words of mine thus: *These other things are things unwritten in that Holy Book.* I do assure you, Sir, you are mightily mistaken. I never told you yet that all Faith was not contain'd in Scripture *explicitly* or *implicitly*. What I meant was, that *the whole Body of* Christs *Doctrin*; (and not only that such a *Book* was *Scripture*,) nay the self-same Doctrin of *Faith* that is contain'd in *Scripture*, comes down by *Tradition*, or the Churche's Testimony. But with this Difference, (as to the *Manner* of it,) among others, that the *Church* that testifies it, having the sense of it in her Breast, can explain her meaning so as to put it out of all Question to Learners, Doubters and Enquirers; which the *Scripture* cannot. Whence we need not *fish for our Faith in the channel of Tyber*, as your great Wit tells us; St. *Peter's* Ship, (the Church) that caught so many Fishes at first, (the Body of Primitive Christians, who were the first deliverers of *Christ's* Doctrin,) hath stor'd up provision enough for the succession of Faith to the Worlds end. There we find it to our Hands. 'Tis your sober *Enquirers* who *Fish* for it among dead unsensed Characters, and in the Lake of *Geneva*; from whence to save the labour of going thither, you and your Friends are deriving a great *Channel* to run into *Thames*, over-swell it's Banks, and drown all the Churches. *Lacus Lemanus* is your *Tyber*, *Geneva* your *Rome*, and *John Calvin* (the Prime of your new *Apostles*) your St. *Peter*.

My First Letter P. 21.

P. 21.

36. All this is but prelude. But, now comes Mr. *G's* Argument, and therefore we are to expect now, how-

ever you but *trifled* hitherto, more pertinent & close Discourse. The first Proposition was this; *All Traditionary* Christians *believe the same to day they did yesterday, & so up to* the time of *our* B. Saviour. This you seem to deny in regard they may perhaps *be so call'd from their adhering to a Tradition which reaches not so high as our Saviours time, but only pretends to it*, whither we only *pretend* to it or no will be seen hereafter, when the Fourth Proposition comes to be examin'd. In the mean time pray jumble not two Questions which are *distinct*, and ought to be kept so. The whole Business here is about the *use* or *Sense* of the word [*Traditionary*] & how we both take it in our present Controversy. Now that we both agree in the Notion of [*Tradition*,] whence [*Traditionary*] is deriv'd, is evident by this, that we lay claim to such a Tradition as reaches to *Christ*, and go about to prove it; you deny our Claim, and endeavour to *disprove* it: But 'tis evident you *deny* the *same* thing to us which we *lay Claim to*; otherwise we should not talk of the same Thing, and so should not understand one another, nor could discourse together; wherefore 'tis manifest we both agree in the Notion or *Meaning* of that *Word*, however we disagree in the *Application* of it to the *Persons*. Nor do we pretend in the least, what you would put upon us here, to infer *hence* that this body of Christians that now adheres to it, *did always* so; but only contend, that if they did not *ever* adhere to it, they must have deserted it and taken up another Rule, and so, ceas'd to be true Claimers of a Tradition from *Christ*, or *Traditionary Christians*. Moreover, we judge we have *right* to lay Claim so it, till we be driven out of it by a former and better Title; since we were in possession of this Rule at the time of the Reformation, or held all our Faith upon that tenure.

37. The second Proposition is this: *If they follow this Rule*

Rule they can never err in Faith. Whence follows the Third; [*And therefore they are Infallible.*] Your Anſwer Sir, to this, Can they adhere ſtill to what was deliver'd, and yet *err* in *Faith*, if what was ſtill deliver'd, was *Chriſt's* Doctrin. Your Anſwer is; *His Friend tells us this is palpably ſelf-evident.* And does not his *Adverſary* confeſs it too? Do not your ſelf acknowledge it in your 218, and 222d. Pages, and ſay you *muſt lay by your Reaſon, turn* Romaniſt, *and renounce your Private Judgment*, if you did not grant it. And can the Reader, ſo well acquainted with your ſhuffles, judge it leſs than *palpably ſelf-evident*, which your humour, ſo reſtiff to grant any thing, tho' never ſo clearly prov'd, is forc't to yield to. Laſtly, does his Friend only *tell* you 'tis ſelf-evident? Does not he prove it to be as Evident as 'tis that *the ſame is the ſame with it ſelf*? And is not ſuch a thing Evident by its own light, or out of the very Terms, that is, *ſelf-evident*? Pray, Sir, when I *prove* any thing, let the Reader know I did ſo; and do not thus conſtantly pretend ſtill that I only *ſaid* ſo, or *told* you ſo. A pretty Stratagem to avoid ſpeaking to my *Proofs*; but how honeſt let the Reader judge. P. 21.

38. But, ſay you, *unleſs this Tradition be longer than it is, yet prov'd to be, they may follow it, and err all along in following it.* No doubt of it; if it fall ſhort of reaching up to *Chriſts*, we may follow it, and Err by following it, as all *Hereticks* do in following their novel Traditions. That (*yet*) is a very pretty Word; for it puts the Reader into a conceit that we have produc't nothing from the beginning of the World, to the very time of your Writing, to prove our Tradition reaches to our *Saviours dayes*; and yet, if we challenge you that we *have* prov'd it in the very next words of our Argument, you can make your eſcape, by ſaying, that you are not *yet* P. 21.

come to ſpeak to that point, and that you meant no more. Who would think there ſhould be ſuch Vertue in a petty Monoſyllable, as at once to diſgrace *us*, and ſave *you* harmleſs! The ſecond Anſwer to this Point is, *Let it* (the Tradition ſpoken of) *be never ſo long, yet if they follow it not, they may err.* Very good! The Arguers Words are, *If they follow this Rule they cannot err in Faith*; which implies, that, if they *do not*, they *may err*: and you ſay the ſelf-ſame over again, with an ayr of Oppoſition, and there's an Anſwer for us now. As if to *conform* to your Adverſaries Words were to *confute* him, any thing will ſerve, rather than ſay nothing.

39. The fourth Propoſition brought to prove that this Tradition we lay Claim to, does indeed reach to *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, is this, *They could not innovate in Faith, unleſs they did forget what they held the day before, or out of malice alter it.* And here lies the main Streſs of the Controverſy between us; for you have granted here, Page 21. 22. that were this Rule follow'd, they muſt ſtill enjoy the ſame Faith *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* taught; and this Diſcourſe is brought to ſhew they *did* follow it. We are to expect then that your choiceſt Engines muſt be ſet on work to baffle a Proof, which, if it holds; brings ſuch dangerous conſequences after it, and indeed concludes the whole Controverſy. Your firſt Attempt is in plain terms moſt Evident, & a moſt Unconſcionable Falſification. After you had (P. 21.) recited this fourth Propoſition, you immediately add. *Our Author undertakes to make this out more clearly, & therefore we will hear what he ſaith for our better Information.* P. 18. *He asks, did Chriſt teach any Errours?* and ſo you go on reciting that whole Argument, which proves, that if the firſt Fathers believ'd what Chriſt taught, and the ſuc-

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ceeding Sons all along believ'd what their Fathers did, the laſt-born Son in the World believ'd the ſame that Chriſt taught. Pray, Sir, play fair above-board. You have directly falſify'd that *whole* Diſcourſe, by pretending here that the words you cite were to make out that *Fourth Propoſition clearly*, (viz. *That we could not innovate in Faith* &c.) whereas the truth of that Fourth Propoſition was *made out* by me nine pages before (viz. p. 9.) and the Diſcourſe you mention here, as intended to make it out, is found p. 18, 19. and levell'd at a quite different buſineſs: *viz.* that a Church could not *adhere to Tradition*, and at the ſame time *erre*, as you pretended we muſt grant of the Greek Church. Clear your Credit when you can, I charge it upon you as a voluntary Inſincerity: but you ſhall never clear it unleſs by putting out your Reader's eyes, or perſwading him not to uſe them. So that it ſeems let us bring what Arguments we will, you need do no more when they are too hard to anſwer, but apply them to a *wrong Point* they were never meant to prove, and then 'tis eaſy to ſhew manifeſtly they are frivolous and good for nothing. In the mean time, who ſees not that your Cauſe as well as your Credit is run a ground and like to ſplit, when you are put to ſuch ſhifts! I wonder how this groſs Fault could eſcape Dr. *St*'s acute ſight, if he perus'd and review'd your Reflexions.

40. Your Second Anſwer, or rather Cavill, is, that you could make as *fine ſport* with the word [*Notwithſtanding*] as I did, but that, it ſeems, it ſpoils your Gravity. Yet you can diſpence with that Formal humour very eaſily, as oft as a hard Point preſſes you, eſpecially when you are put to *Proving*: nor are we now to learn that you can laugh at a *feather*, when you have nothing of more *weight* to ſay. But, where lies the

Jeſt

jest; I never excepted against the *Word*, but the *misapplying* it by Dr. *St.* who, when he was at a loss to give an Answer to Mr. C's Demonstration, very learnedly and advisedly *thought it best* to deny the Conclusion, Object an Argument of his own against it, and then bid the Opponent prove his *Thesis* (which he had prov'd already) *notwithstanding* his Argument. When you find me thus untowardly making use of That, or any other, Word, you are at liberty to except against me. In the mean time put this in the number of your Reflections, that when a man pretends to make sport when there is no occasion, he but discovers his own Folly. But the Point is, Can you make good his *Logick* in this irregular Proceeding? This is what we expected from a writer that undertakes to *defend* him. But the Task is so insuperable, that neither your wonderful Learning, nor Dr. *St.* himself, nor all the World to help him can ever be able to do it; unless he can make the Schools renounce all Rules of *Art*, and Mankind their *Reason*. But what were my words that were so mirthful? Why, I deny'd that a Body of men *could adhere to Tradition, and notwithstanding erre*. Is here any occasion of *fine sport*? Or, cannot I use a plain word in the Context of my Discourse falling in *naturally*, because he had mistook it unskilfully and *inartificially*? I see by this sliding over it so gentilely, this is all the Answer I am to expect to my 10, 11, 12, 13, 33*d.* and 34*th.* pages; where such Errours against all Methods of Dispute are charg'd upon the Dr. as would banckrupt any mans Credit who had not a large stock of it laid in beforehand. And all the favour his best Friends can do him to excuse his *Person*, is to refund it upon his *Cause*.

41. But, tho' it was granted that Discourse of mine cited

cited by you pag. 21. was ſo evident, that it was both *unreaſonable* and *abſurd* to deny it, yet it muſt not eſcape without ſome animadverſion. A Fault there muſt be in it, that's decree'd; and what ſhould that Fault be, but that *good* one of being too Evident. And this, as was ſhewn formerly, is one of the new tricks taken up to evade Anſwering. When our Arguments are too clear to be baffled by any (even plauſible) Reaſon, being next to ſelf-evident, or eaſily reducible to it, to ſave us the labour you reduce it thither your ſelf, but firſt vilely deform'd, that it may become a fit Subject for your Jeſting way of Confuting. *We will grant him* (ſay you) *it is impoſſible to prove that men have err'd notwithſtanding they never err'd.* Very excellent! But do you not grant much more; *viz.* that *It is impoſſible they ſhould adhere to our Rule, and yet erre?* You *do*, and, in doing ſo, you grant the whole ſubſtance of my Diſcourſe. And ſo *let them laugh that win.* I am ſure you have *loſt* by this forc't Confeſſion, that Tradition is a certain *Rule*, and that I have prov'd it evidently. Which no man will grant of *your* Rule that is in his wits, nor can the wit of all the men in the World ever *prove* it to be *ſuch* as you have *yielded* ours to be.

42. The ſame diſingenuity often repeated gives all the force to your next *Sect.* For, 1. *You pretend we but *ſuppoſe it hitherto, that theſe Traditionary Chriſtians adhere undeclininglyto a Tradition deſcending really, and invariably from Chriſt and his Apoſtles*, &c. How! only *ſuppos'd hitherto!* Was it not *prov'd*, and not barely *ſuppos'd* in the Fourth Propoſition, and made good by me, p. 9. If you will not come up to it, but ſtand hovering, fencing, jeſting, falſifying and capering about by the way, muſt we be blam'd as barely *ſuppoſing it hitherto?* 2. You falſify our words: For who ever ſaid

*P. 22.

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a *Supposition* is *Self-evident*, which every one sees while 'tis barely a *Supposition*, is not *Evident* at all. Why quote you not the page where we say this? Because you would not be caught. 3. You falsify again without care of credit or regard to your Reader, in affirming, that *from this self-evident Supposition I necessarily conclude thus; Suppose Traditionary Christians neither did nor could erre, 'tis certain they neither did nor could erre.* But why again no place quoted? Because you had again falsify'd it, and durst not hazard discovery.

43. I perceive, your play here (p. 22.) is to disjoint our Discourse, and jumble all the pieces of it confusedly together; and, so, it must be my Work to rectify what you had so industriously unravell'd. Since then Mr. *G.* had made use of these words [*Traditionary Christians*] their Sense was first to be explain'd, and, therefore I *declar'd that the meaning of them was, *such Christians* as proceeded upon an *Immediate Delivery* not only at present, or *since the Council of Trent, or some hundreds of years before*, as you put upon us, p. 20. but upwards till Christ's time; and all the advantage I gain'd thence was that in case they did *not* adhere to it *all along*, it would follow that the *pretended* Traditionary Christians (*our selves*) were not *really such*, and so the Subject of our Dispute would be lost, and we should receive a perfect foil. Could any thing be clearer or more candid? Yet, how many shuffles, and baffling Jests, you have been pleas'd to bestow on us instead of admitting so clear a Proposition; to how many wrong ends you have apply'd it, never thought on by us, we have already seen. For the Truth is, you are so horribly afraid of any connected Discourse, that you dare not so much as suffer it to peep out, but it alarums your Jealousie; no, not the

* My First Letter, p. 8.

the very ſignification of the ſingle words to be diſtinctly known, or the moſt Evident Propoſition, tho' it be Indifferent to either Cauſe, to be admitted. Now let's ſee what you ſay to it; you make it amount to this: *Suppoſe Traditionary Chriſtians neither did nor could err, it is Certain they neither did nor could err.* Which you call my *neceſſary Concluſion from my ſelf-evident Suppoſition.* You improve mightily, Sir, in your Talent of Inſincerity. Our entire Diſcourſe runs thus, if we muſt needs put it into Form for you. *Thoſe who adhere to Tradition all along from the beginning, neither did nor could err in Faith,* (otherwiſe they would not be Adherents to *Tradition* or *Traditionary Chriſtians*). But this Body of Chriſtians, call'd *The Roman Catholick Church, does now,* and *did from time to time adhere to Tradition. Therefore this Body of Chriſtians, call'd The Roman Catholick Church, neither did or could err in Faith.* This is Mr. *G*'s Argument. The *Major* is granted by * your ſelf. The Proof of the *Minor* is contain'd in Mr. *G*'s Fourth Propoſition, which I have ſhown to be valid in my Firſt Letter, *p.* 9. and the Diſcuſſion of it is now under hand. The *Concluſion* is in greateſt danger, leſt you ſhould, according to the new True-Proteſtant Logick, deny it again, and bring ſome Inſtance againſt it; otherwiſe, ſince it follows evidently, it will ſhift well enough for it ſelf. This, I ſay, is our intire Diſcourſe; all the reſt is your flaſhy Drollery, your ever faithful Friend, when you are perplext how to Anſwer.

* P. 22.

* P. 21, 22.

44. The Argument then for the Perpetuity of our Tradition from Chriſt's time, runs thus. *They could not innovate in Faith, unleſs they did forget what they held the day before, or, out of malice, alter it.* To enforce this Argument, I diſcours'd * thus. *You do not, I ſuppoſe, deſire we ſhould prove that men had alwaies Me-*

* My Firſt Letter, P. 32.

mories, or *that Christians were never malicious enough to damn themselves and their Posterities wittingly; and yet, it can stick no where else.* Yet you are such a bold Undertaker, that you will needs prove they may be *both* thus *Forgetful* and thus *Malicious*. A hard Task one would think; especially since the Argument proceeds upon Forgetting and *Altering* what they Remembred and Held *Yesterday*. Your First Reason to
P. 23. prove they might be thus *Forgetful*, is; because *Otherwise it is hard to say why the Pen-men of the Scripture should have been at the needless pains to write it.* Let's apply this to the Argument, and your Discourse is this. 'Tis hard to say that Christians could have remembred their *Yesterday's* Faith, had not Scripture been writ. Now, pray Sir, be serious, and tell us, Do you think there is any danger, or even possibility of this among the very Protestants in *England*, tho' they had never a Bible to read to morrow? How many of them read not so much as a Chapter in three or four days, how many not in a much longer time; nay, how few of them read *all their Faith* there in a Year, or even in their whole Life; and yet they retain the memory not only of their *Yesterdays*, but *last Years* Faith? What a weakness is this, to suppose Miracles must be done for no other end, but that you may answer our Argument? The Reasons why Scripture was writ, you
2 Tim. c. 3. v. 16, 17. might have read in St. *Paul* to *Timothy*; where there is no such thing as to make men remember their *Yesterdays* Faith, nor that Scripture is of Necessity at all; but only that 'tis *Profitable* for many Uses there enumerated. Your Second Argument to confute our Demonstration, is a Text, 2 *Pet.* 1. 15. by which you will convince us, *Mens memories are not always so faithful*: You must mean to remember their *Yesterdays Faith*; for

for this Degree of Memory only the Argument inſiſts on. But what ſays that B. Apoſtle? *I will endeavour, that you may be able, after my Deceaſe, to have theſe things always in remembrance.* Now, there is not ſo much as *one Word* in the *whole Chapter* concerning the remembring or forgetting their *Faith*, much leſs the Faith they held *Teſterday*; or leaving their *Faith* in Writing for that purpoſe, but only (Faith *ſuppos'd*) of remembring his particular Exhortations to Good Life; and, by thus inculcating them, to *ſtir them up* (as 'tis ſaid, *v.* 13.) to Chriſtian Virtue, and leaving ſuch things in Writing to *that* end. Now, ſuch Spiritual and Moral Inſtructions are both *eaſily Intelligible*, eſpecially, ſince he had taught the ſame to them formerly; and Man's Natural Corruption making even good men apt to ſlide back from the high degree of Perfection in which they had been educated; no doubt a Letter left by that Holy Apoſtle, now near his death, as he there tells them, would ſtrike them more feelingly, and *excite* them more effectually to purſue that Courſe of Holy Life, in which he had inſtructed them. What miſerable Stuff is this? Would not Faith have an excellent *Baſis*, did it depend on Scripture interpreted by your Private Judgments. When this one Inſtance manifeſts, you have the boldneſs to quote Scripture for any thing, tho' never ſo diſparate and unconcerning, and then blaſphemouſly nick-name it *God's Word*, when 'tis nothing at all to the purpoſe. But, I beſeech you, Sir, let's have the Return of one *Scholar* to *another*. If our Argument lye too *open*, or the Connexion in it be too *ſlack*, ſpeak to it as you ought; but think not your *Private Interpretations* a competent Solution to *Demonſtrations*. If ſuch wretched Anſwers may ſerve the turn, the Schools and Univerſities may ſhut up

Shop, and Reaſoning bid adieu to the World: Every Fop will find a Text he can hook in, nor will he fail of interpreting it blindly to *his* own purpoſe, when he is gravell'd with an Argument; and of calling it *God's Word* when he has done. Who will not ſee you are ſinking, when you catch at ſuch Straws and weak Twigs to keep you above Water.

45. By this time the Reader will be ſatisfy'd, that *Notwithſtanding* all you have anſwer'd, Men had *Memory* enough not to forget their *Yeſterdays Faith*. Next, you go about to prove *Chriſtians* may be *malicious* enough to *alter* it. *May not Chriſtians* (ſay you, *p.* 23) *through malice and wickedneſs, be as careleſs of preſerving the Faith, as in maintaining Holineſs in themſelves or their Poſterity, when they know that Sin is as damnable as Errour?* Be Judge your ſelf. Do not *many* of your Congregation (and the like may be ſaid of all Sects) ſin *often*, and yet *few* or *none* of them deſert their Faith *once?* The reaſons why the Parallel holds not, are theſe. 1. Sins are generally private; at leaſt, Men do for the moſt part endeavour and hope to conceal their Faults, for fear of ſhame and diſcredit. But the Change of Faith muſt be *profeſt* and *open*; otherwiſe it alters not the caſe; and Poſterity will ſtill believe on, according as things appear outwardly. 2. Sinners are ſeldome Malicious to that degree, as to reſolve firmly to perſiſt ſo to the end of their Lives; but generally fall out of frailty, and intend and hope to repent. And ſo this very thing will oblige them ſtill to hold to their former *Faith*, which (as Experience tells them) furniſhes Sinners with means of Repentance. 3. Man's Nature being inclin'd to Truth, ſcarce one man tells a Lye, but hopes to cloak it. But here, when they deliver *another Faith* for the *ſame* that was held *Yeſterday*,

day, every man muſt know his Neighbour to be an abominable ſhameleſs Lyar; and, the Concern being ſo Sacred, muſt hold himſelf and all his fellow-Alterers the wickedſt men living. Unleſs it be ſaid they went conſcientiouſly upon ſome other ground than Tradition; for to pretend to be ſav'd by Tenets held upon *no ground at all*, is abſolutely impoſſible to conſiſt with Rational Nature. But 'tis impoſſible they ſhould take up another Ground: Becauſe, if they could not innovate in *Faith*, they could not innovate in that upon which they held *all* their Faith. Nor could they be certain, but all their former Faith might be renounc'd, if a new Rule of Faith were taken up. To hear of which, could not conſiſt with the temper of Chriſtians, to bear a loſs for *all their Faith*. Beſides, Men are more tenacious of their *Principles*, eſpecially if they have gain'd a vaſt Credit by their long Continuance, than they are to relinquiſh all they have receiv'd upon thoſe Principles. Again, Tradition is the Authority of the whole *Eccleſia Docens*, the Chiefeſt part of (I might ſay the *Eccleſia Credens* too) witneſſing the deliver'd Faith; which is ſo vaſt a Body, that it could never (were there nothing but its own Intereſt) permit it ſelf to be thought to have atteſted a Lye hitherto: Add, That none could be competent Judges what was fit to be a Rule of Faith, but They who were ſo concern'd both in Duty and Intereſt, Tradition ſhould not be ſet aſide. Which conſiderations clearly evince an Univerſal Change in the Rule of Faith; and this over the whole Body of Believers is abſolutely impracticable. Laſtly, There muſt be ſome great time between their diſcarding Tradition and eſpouſing a New Rule; during which time, we muſt imagin the whole Church (except perhaps ſome few that diſcourſe it firſt) would be made up

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of *Seekers*; some hovering one way, some another; in which case they would as yet have no *Faith*, and consequently there could be no *Church*. 'Tis left then, that if they could innovate in Faith, they must pretend to *Tradition* still when they had evidently *deserted* it; that is, they must profess to *hold* the *Yesterdays* Faith, when all the World must see, and every man's own Heart must tell him the contrary: Which is the highest Impossibility. *Luther* alter'd, *Calvin* alter'd, so did many others; but none of them had the face to say they still *adher'd* to Tradition, or the Faith deliver'd immediately before, and that they had *not alter'd*. 4. Men fall into Sins through Temptations, and Temptations are *various*, according to mens Tempers and Circumstances; whence it happens, that one falls into *one* sort of Sin, others into another, as things light. But 'tis impossible there should have been Causes laid in the World, so Universal, as to reach a whole Body of men consisting of so many Millions of different Countries, Tempers, and Circumstances, so as to impel them effectually to fall into the same Individual sort of sin, and *this* such a horrid and shameful one, *viz.* The Altering the *Faith* they hop'd to be sav'd by, and this so suddenly. The Nature of the thing shows evidently 'tis above *Chance*; and the very *Interest* of the World would forbid such a *Conspiracy*, were there neither Religion, Conscience, nor Common Humanity in it. Their very Passions, Disaffections, and Enmity to one another, would make them disagree in carrying on such a wicked Project: Their Natural Tempers, abstracting from their Common Propension to Truth, and the care of preserving their Credits utterly lost by speaking such open and pernicious falshoods, would render them apt, out of a meer Antipathy of Humour,

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to oppoſe one another; and all this, ſuppoſing there were no Goodneſs at all in the World; to ſuppoſe which, evacuates all Chriſtian Motives, and their Efficacy, and makes our dear Saviour preach and dye *in vain*; eſpecially, ſince there never wanted, no, not even in the worſt times, a fair Degree of Diſciplin to *apply* thoſe Motives. Nay, State-Intereſt, or the Quarrels of Princes, would make them glad to take hence an Advantage againſt their emulous Neighbours; and to think it the beſt Policy to lay hold on ſuch an occaſion, to fight in behalf of *Faith* and Common *Honeſty*, againſt a pack of ſhameleſs Lyars, and Deſerters both of Religion and Human Nature, who car'd not what became of their own Salvation, or that of others. Laſtly, Theſe Cauſes thwarting the Univerſal Alteration of *Faith*, while Chriſtians proceeded on the former Rule of Tradition; and full as much hindring the taking up a New Rule in oppoſition to the Teſtimony of the Univerſal Church; as there could be no Cauſe to make men conſpire to alter the *Teſterdays Faith*, ſo *Chriſtian Motives*, which contain the greateſt *Hopes* and *Fears* imaginable, the Hopes of never-ending Bliſs, and Fears of Eternal and Intolerable Miſery, which were believ'd and apply'd to the generality of Chriſtians, could not, on the contrary ſide, but influence them moſt powerfully to preſerve unchanged and inviolate both the Rule and the Faith. 'Tis as Certain then, that a very Great Body of Adherers to Tradition, and conſequently to the firſt-deliver'd Faith, would ſtill remain on Foot in the World, as that *Effects* could not be without *Proper Cauſes*, or that *Motives*, which are the *Proper Cauſes* to work upon *Rational Nature*, will produce their *Effect*: I mean ſuch Motives as engage their very Nature. Add, That ſuch a Change muſt needs

needs have been publickly known; and, so, have excited the Pens, Tongues, Intellects, perhaps Swords too, of the Traditionary and Innovating Party one against another, at the time of the Change, as we see has happen'd in our late Alterations or Reformations. Yet no such thing was ever mentioned in History, or come to us by Tradition, or any thing alledg'd, but some differences amongst particular Spectators, and their Adherents siding with them, which amounts to nothing comparable to that Universal and most Memorable Concussion such a vast Change as this we speak of, must needs have made in the whole Body of the Church.

46. Summing up then this Discourse, 'tis manifest you have no way to answer our Argument, but by supposing there was a time (the Lord knows when) in which there were no considerable Body of Men in the World, either good Christians, honest men, or valuing their Credit; but only a company of brutish, Godless, Lying Ruffians, without the least Degree of Grace or Shame in them. Unfortunate Confuter! *Aristotle* lookt upon things as they were; *Plato* on things as they should be; but, to make a show of an Answer to our Argument, you would have your Readers look upon the Christian World, as it *neither is, was, should* be, or *can* be.

P. 23. 47. But you object. *What if all Sons did not understand aright all that Fathers had Taught them!* *Answer.* If *All* did not, *most* of the Intelligent and Pastours, who were of greater Authority than those, *some* less-understanding Persons, and ty'd by their Duty and Office to instruct their Ignorance, would and could easily do it, when the Doctrin, open Practice and Discipline of the Christian Church was settled, and made it both

both so obligatory and so easie. 2. *What if some Sons were so negligent, as to take no care either to remember or teach what they had been taught by their Fathers? Answ.* If only *some* were so, then those who were diligent to do this, would reprehend them, and see to have things amended, and those careless Persons, especially if Pastours, reduc'd to their Duty; there being Orders on foot in the World to oblige them to it. Besides, 'tis an unheard-of *Negligence*, not to know or remember the *next day* the Faith they held the *day before*; nor did it require that care you pretend to retain the remembrance of it four and twenty hours. 3. *What if some, through Ambition, Vain-Glory and Popularity, set a broach New Doctrines, and taught them for Apostolical Tradition? Answ.* If only *some* were so, then those *others*, who were good Men, and free from those Vices, would set themselves to oppose them, make known their *false* pretences, and lay open their *Novelties*: Both Reason assuring us, that Good men use not to be so stupidly careless in such Sacred Concerns; and History informing us they were ever very zealously vigilant to oppose Hereticks, when ever they began to vent their Pestilent Doctrins. 4. *What if others, to save themselves from Persecution, conceal'd part, and corrupted more of the Doctrin of Christ by their own Traditions, taken not from Christ, but from their Forefathers, Jews or Gentiles?* Then those who were *out of* Persecution, or *valu'd it not* so much as they did their Conscience, would oppose their Unchristian Proceedings: Then the Fathers, Doctors, and Pastours of the Church would *reveal* what they had *conceal'd*, *restore* what they had *corrupted*, and manifest that their Pretences and Subterfuges were False, and that the Doctrin they subintroduc'd, had not descended by the open Channel of the Christian Church's Tradition. 5. *What* P. 24.

if some through a blind Zeal, ignorant Devotion, superstitious Bigotry and vain Credulity, added many things to the Doctrin of Christ; which by degrees grew into more general Customs, till at last they were own'd, and impos'd as necessary to be believ'd and practis'd. Anſw. If they belong not to Faith, they could not come in, while the Rule of Tradition was adher'd to, as has been prov'd and granted: Tho' perhaps ſome Points involv'd in the main Body of Faith, yet ſo *particularly* or *univerſally* known, might, on emergent occaſions, be fingled out, defin'd and more ſpecially recommended than formerly; without any Detriment to the Faith received, but rather to the Advantage and farther Explication of it. And, as for unwarrantable Practices, as they belong not to *Faith*, ſo they do not concern our preſent buſineſs. 6. *What if Errour any of theſe Ways brought forth, grew, multiply'd, ſpread, obtain'd moſt power, and drove out all that held the naked Truth out of all thoſe Countries where it came*; Of which *all Hiſtories furniſh us with Inſtances.* Anſw. But does any Hiſtory tell you this Errour ſpread over the *whole* Church, without your ſuppoſing the Queſtion that ſuch or ſuch a Tenet is an *Errour* which you *pretend* ſuch; which is above the Skill of Hiſtorians to decide, and is only to be determin'd by examining Firſt who have, who have not a *Certain Rule of Faith.* Beſides, *Errour in Faith* never yet *appear'd*, even though abetted by Great men in the Church, but it was *oppos'd*; and Truth grew clearer by the Oppoſition made to it; and tho' for a while it grew under the ſhadow of ſome Particular State, yet no Hiſtory ever recorded, that all the States of *Chriſtendom* ever joyn'd to protect it.

48. Well, but what are all theſe rambling Queſtions to our Argument, which inſiſts on the impoſſibility of *Alte-*

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ring the yesterdays Faith, but either out of want of Memory, or out of Malice? Apply them to this, and they lose all their force, how plausibly soever a witty man, that talks at rovers, supposes all to be Error, which the Revolting Party Held, and never considers the Nature of Christian Mankind and their Circumstances, may descant upon it. For what Paradox is there, tho' never so ridiculous, that Wit discoursing thus wildly and at randome, cannot make plausible? Our General Objection then against *your whole Paragraph is this, that you never apply your several *What ifs?* to our Argument. Besides, that you pretend in the beginning of it that you will shew other Reasons of such an Alteration, which are neither *Forgetfulness* nor *Malice*; and yet most of those you here assign are *Defects of Goodness*, which implies some degree of *Malice*, and some of them, the highest Malice that can be. *P. 23. 24. P. 23.

49. But (say you) we *must seek out a new Medium to prove our Church Infallible*, for this already brought, proves only she does not err *so long as she holds to Tradition*; but *still* she may err, *if* she *leaves it*; wherefore we must prove she *cannot leave Tradition*, or else *She* is not *Infallible*, and so we are but where we were. And do not you see this is already prov'd to your Hand? For (not to repeat the many Reasons produc't for this Point, *Sect.* 45.) *Innovation* and *Tradition* being formerly and diametrically opposite, what proves she could not *Innovate*, proves also that she could not *leave Tradition*; for this were to *Innovate*. And this, our Argument you see has already *prov'd*; nor is the force of that Proof weaken'd by any thing you have hitherto *said*. I wonder you should dissemble a thing so obvious, and run forwards upon that P. 25.

affected Inadvertence of yours, as if it were a business unthought of by us before, and required a *new Medium*; whereas it is the very thing our Argument chiefly aims at: and for which, we had of our own accord, without any one's bidding, made provision for before hand.

P. 25. 50. Your next *Sect. P.* 25. would perswade us rather to prove our Church *free from Errour*, which (say you) *is a much easier task, if She be so, than to prove Her Self Infallible.* Very Good! Your wise advice amounts to this, that you would have us *prove* our *Conclusion* without beginning with our *Premises*, or *Principles*. If this be Yours and Dr. *Sl*'s Logick, 'tis a very preposterous one; and can only be made good by a Figure call'd *Hysteron Proteron*, or *Cart before Horse*. Though I must confess it keeps *decorum*, and is perfectly of the same hue with all your Logick hitherto. Please then to know that all our Faith may be Errour, if the *Testimony of the Church*, (our Rule) may be Erroneous; and, if it *cannot*, nothing we hold or Faith *can* be so. Again, what mean you by our *probing her free from Errour?* Your meaning is, we should only prove She Embraces no Errour *now*; but what Provision would this make for Her not falling perhaps into Errour *to morrow?* We ought then to *prove* (and so ought you too of *your* Rule) that if we adhere to it, it can *at no time* permit us to *Err*; which could not be if at any time it *might be deceiv'd it self*, or leave us *deceiv'd* while we follow it. Besides, if it were granted *Fallible* or Liable to Errour, by what more evident Light, or greater and clearer Testimony could we guide our selves to know when it *did actually Err*, when *not* in deriving down *Christs* Doctrine? Or by what more certain Way could we be directed to arrive at Christ's *sence*. If there were any

any ſuch. *It* and not *Tradition* ought to be our *Rule*. We return you then your Counſel back with many Thanks, for it neither ſuits in any degree with Logick, Common Senſe, our *own*, or any *other* Principles. But however it ſuites better with your convenience, than theſe crabbed Demonſtrations: For you tell us *One ſingle Inſtance of her erring is enough to Anſwer all the Arguments can be brought for her Infallibility.* Sure you have a mind to convince all Schollars that read your Books, you never heard of Logick in your Life: Or elſe you would endeavour to baffle the whole Art of *Diſcourſing*, becauſe you foreſee 'tis like to baffle you. An *Inſtance* may perhaps make an *Objection* againſt the *Concluſion* taking it *ſingle* for a meer propoſition and not as ſtanding under *Proof*; but *Arguments* are *anſwer'd* by finding defects in the *Premiſes* or the *Conſequence*. You might have ſeen (to uſe your own words) better *Logick read to the* D. *of* P. in my Pag. 10 and 11. Where 'tis ſhewn you, that *if the Premiſes be right, and the Inference good, the Concluſion muſt be as neceſſarily True, as that the ſame Thing cannot be, and not be at once*: Yet, you take no notice of it, but ſtill run on obſtinately to confute all the Schools and Univerſities that ever Writ or Taught *Logick* from the beginning of the World, to the Time of His and Your Writing. The Truth is, you are ſick of the Argument, and would ſhift it off on any Faſhion. Bring what Inſtances you pleaſe; But firſt you are to Anſwer our Argument, and next, to ſee the Authority that qualifies your Inſtance for an Argument, be above Morally Certain; otherwiſe it will be beyond the power of any Logick to make it *conclude*: For the force of that *Maxim* on which the *Concluſiveneſs* of any Argument is built, is far beyond any *Moral Certainty*; Nor let *Dr. St.* think Ibid.

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to ſtand arguing ſtill *ad hominem*; but let him be ſure his Inſtance infers the *Truth* of his Concluſion, when it comes to be put to the Teſt of a Syllogiſm. This we will expect from him; ſince it is the Right of the Reſpondent to deny any thing that is not driven up to *Evidence*; and by that Teſt we will judge of your Inſtance and other Arguments, if you have any that you will vouch to be *Demonſtrative*, that is, *Concluſive*.

51. You ſeem ſo kind as *not to undertake to prove that an erring Church adheres to Tradition*, if it be *True Apoſtolical Tradition*, and that it *adheres to it wholly and ſolely*. I a little wonder at this; for if you mean not by *Tradition* ſuch a one as is built on Living voice and Practice, you ran quite away from the Point; if ſuch a one; you quit your own Rule, by requiring men ſhould *adhere to the other wholly and Solely*, and admit that a Church adhering to ſuch a Tradition is not an *Erring Church*. I inferr: Therefore, till you anſwer our Argument which proves that our Tradition could not be interrupted by any Innovation, you cannot with reaſon deny but ours is *ſuch*. You think Infallibility a kind of barr againſt our mutual Agreement; as if there were any hopes or even poſſibility men's Minds ſhould center, unleſs it be in ſomething that is *Abſolutely* Certain or *Evident*. Shew us ſomething elſe endu'd with ſuch an Evidence as is able to oblige Human Nature to an Univerſal Acceptation and Conviction, and then blame us for maintaining Infallibility. Till then pray, excuſe us for making ſuch Proviſion for Faith, as ſets it beyond Poſſibility of Falſehood. You drop ſome inſignificant Exceptions after the Shower of your ſhrewd (inviſible) Reaſons. As that our * *Argument muſt prove that* no man *that hath been taught the Faith can ever err from it*; and yet ſtill withall

* P. 26.

withall, *confeſs that a Church, following Tradition now, may leave it afterwards.* This were an Incoherence with a witneſs: But how do you ſhew our Argument *muſt* prove this abſurd poſition! Onely with ſaying it there over and over again, without the leaſt attempt to ſhew from our words or Doctrine, this pretended *neceſſity*, that we muſt both contradict our ſelves ſo groſſely, and beſides go againſt our daily experience. I do aſſure the Reader we have no where either ſuch words or ſenſe, and that 'tis meerly a falſe ſham or ſome weak deduction of yours, for want of ſome better thing to ſay. Our Tenet is that, tho' not one ſingle man can erre while he *adheres* to our *Rule*, yet even ſome particular Churches may leave off *adhering* to Tradition, and ſo *err* in Faith. Onely we ſay that the main Body of the Church conſiſting of all particular Churches that compound Chriſtianity, being ſupported by Motives of adhering to the former Faith, ſo Prevalent, and Univerſal, and *apply'd* to a very vaſt multitude of them, cannot conſpire to relinquiſh this Rule, go againſt and diſgrace their own Teſtimony, nor conſequently err in Faith. The word [*All*] indeed, and [*They*] in each Propoſition are diſtributive, and applicable to each ſingle man; but do you find the leaſt word in any of them, that ſayes that ſingle men or great multitudes *may* not out of malice *alter* Faith? Where find you *that*! Or that they cannot deſert the *Rule*, and by Conſequence their *Faith*. Pray, be not ſo liberal of our Conceſſions, without ſhewing ſomthing under our hands for it.

52. But you ſum up your Solution of our Demonſtration with an admirable grace, or rather you give us the very Quintelſence of your Anſwer to it in theſe few words. *The Church of Rome ſays all have broke the* P. 27. *Rule*

Rule of Tradition but she onely, and *proves* it, by *saying that she holds the same to day she did yesterday, and so up to our B. Saviours time.* You proceed. *We call again for a Proof of this. She tells us, If she follow'd this Rule she could never err in Faith. But did she follow this Rule? She says she did; and if you will not believe her, there's an end.* How smart and victorious this looks! But the best is, 'tis wholly built on some few of your own wilfull Falsifications. Pray, where did we ever bring these Words, [*If she followed this Rule*, &c.] For a *Proof that she holds the same to day which she did yesterday.* Or where did we prove we follow'd this *Rule* only with *iffs*? But why are you so shy to quote the Pages or Paragraphs where we bring these absurd Proofs? because you would be at Liberty to say any thing and yet not expose your Credit. And 'tis worth noting, that you point out the Page in other occasions very diligently; but, when you have a mind to falsify, 'tis still suppress't. 'Tis observable too that this insincerity of yours here is of such advantage to you, that it gains the whole Cause. For, if we prove this main Point no better but with *Iffs*, & that our Argument has no force but by standing to your Kindness in *Believing what Our Church says*, then *there's an End indeed*; for nothing can be more Evident, than, 'tis that in that Supposition, we are utterly routed, & our whole Cause quite defeated. Now I would entreat the Reader (for You are resolv'd neither to use your Eyes nor Honesty, lest they should too openly accuse you) that he will once more review our Argument, as 'tis put down by Dr. *St.* himself, First Letter, *p.* 4. and 5. and made good by me, *p.* 8. and 9. and he will see clearly, the first half of it was to prove, that *If they follow'd this Rule*, viz. *of believing the same to day they did yesterday, they could never err in Faith*, or

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were *Infallible*: And the other part [*And they could not innovate in Faith, unless they did forget what they held the day before, or out of malice alter it*] was brought to prove they did ever follow that Rule. For since nothing but *Innovation* can break the Chain of Tradition, whoever proves they *could not innovate*, proves directly they could not *recede from Tradition*. Nay, 'twas confest by Dr. *St.* himself, when he was as yet in better circumstances, (First Letter, p. 5. l. 4.) that *we prov'd our Church could not innovate*, by the *Medium* now mention'd. Yet you have the Confidence to tell the Reader, *She only says she follows this Rule; and if you will not believe her, there's an end*: Whereas you ought in candour to have said, *They prov'd she follow'd, and could not but follow this Rule; but I cannot answer their Argument, and there's an End.* See what you have brought upon your self, and how fatal it is to your pretended Answer, that as you *began your Reply to this 4th Proposition with a most wicked Falsification; so you close it up here with a double one, and those too of so large a size, that were they True, they had carry'd all before them. Your intermediate Endeavours are many of them of the *same kind*; the rest *Mistakes*, (and generally *wilful* ones) which I thought at first to have reckon'd up; but they thicken'd so upon me, that I saw it would be tedious to *count* them, and so gave it over. But your excuse for this insincere Carriage is, That you do no more than all Writers use to do, who have had the bad luck to defend an ill Cause, and come to be prest with Close Truth. All they can do, when they are not able to *give a good acount* of themselves, is, to bend all their study and seek about for shifts, *how they may give no account*. And the D. of P. and you are of this prudent Generation. I say once again, 'Tis your *Chief Study* how to *shift*; and *long Study* of any thing, with frequent *practice*, makes a man *Excellent at it*; & every man loves most to do that he

P. 27.

*See above, Sect. 39.

is Excellent; and so we are to expect it. To convince the Reader whether I wrong you or no, Put you your Arguments for the Absolute Certainty of your Rule in conveying to us Christ's Sense, and for your following it, as close and home as you can possibly; and see whether do not answer it directly, fairly & squarely, without any of these shifting Excursions or Fallifications: And let our different Carriage be the Test to distinguish the candid Asserters of Truth, from the Insincere Abetters of Errour.

53. After I had shew'd that Scripture privately interpreted could not be a Rule of Faith, the nature and method of our Dispute led me into an Enquiry what was in reality *your* Rule, as *you* are *such a kind of Protestants*; and, to this End I discours'd thus; That Scripture was a Generical Rule, common to you and all Heresies in the world; and, That your *Specifical* Rule must be [*as my self and those of my Judgment understand or interpret it.*] And can there be any thing more Evident? Do not they all strive to lay claim to the *Letter* of Scripture for their Rule, as well as *you?* Do not they all, as much as *you*, rely upon it, and avail themselves by quoting it still, and endeavouring to shew it favourable to their respective Tenets? Plain Experience informs us and every one, they all do this, and that too, with an ardour and earnestness equal to yours, as far as we can discern. In this then you *all* agree; and therefore 'tis beyond all dispute, Scripture is your *Common* or *Generical* Rule, if we may believe your Carriage and Profession. Now let's see what 'tis you disagree in. And 'tis manifest you *disagree* in the *Sense* of Scripture; otherwise, the Sense of Scripture being *God's Sense* or *your Faith*, You would be of the *same Faith*; which cannot be pretended, since you contradict them, and they You, in matters belonging to Faith; and What's the Way to arrive at the *Sense* of Scripture? Certainly the *Interpreting* it; for *Interpretation* signifies in proper

speech

ſpeech the *Giving or Aſſigning to Words their ſenſe*; and do not you accept that Senſe of Scripture for your Faith which your Private Judgment interpreting it, conceives to be truly its meaning; and they, in like manner, as they apprehend it, ought to be interpreted? Is it not for this very end you ſo cry up your Judgment of *Diſcretion*, and that you are not to ſubmit to the Decrees of Councils or Conſent of Fathers, farther than you conceive them agreeable to the Word of God? Does not Dr. *St.* profeſs openly, that his ſober *Enquirer* may underſtand the Explicit Senſe of Implicit Points that are Doubtful (ſuch as all main Points of Faith are) without the Church's *help*, (Second Letter, p. 21.) that is, without any Publick Interpreter? And, Will you after this deny that Scripture is your *General* Rule in which you agree with all Hereticks; and your *ſpecifical*, peculiar or proper Rule, in which *you* differ from *them*, and *they from one another*, is Scripture, as *Interpreted by your ſelves*? The thing is plain, let's ſee what you ſay to it. You, with a very dexterous artifice, *grant* and *not grant* it, as we ſhall ſee anon: and tell us, 1. That *Scripture is and ought to be common to all Hereticks, tho' they miſerably abuſe it.* Pray, Sir, uſe my words; I ſaid, *a Common* Rule to them and you; and, Can that be truly a *Rule*, which they direct themſelves by and yet warp into Errour? *You* tell us indeed *they miſerably abuſe it*; and the *Socinians* will ſay the ſame of *you*, while you pretend to prove thence Chriſt is God. And how ſhall this Quarrel be decided? For 'tis hitherto a drawn Match between you, while you fight with that ambidextrous Weapon, *Scripture's Letter interpretable by Private Judgments.* The Point ſtill ſticks: How can an indifferent man, ſeeking for Faith by *your Rule*, be ſatisfy'd *They* abuſe it more than *You*? Muſt not you be oblig'd to ſhew him ſome clearer Light than They have, and that this Light juſtifies you for judging thus harſhly of them, that they are ſuch *miſerable Abuſers of Scripture*?

And, if you do not, must he not in true reason judge, 'tis pretended by you *gratis*; as also, that you are highly uncharitable, to charge them downright with so hainous a Crime? 'Tis that *farther degree of Light* in You that must justifie you for these pretences, which we would gladly see; for, whatever it is, 'tis *That* which distinguishes *you* from *them*, and sets you up to be *Right Users* of Scripture; that is, it gives you the *Right Sense* of it, or your *Faith*; and so it must difference you Essentially from them in your Grounds or Rule. 'Tis this Light, I say, we would be at; Why is it so shy to shew its Face? 2. Tho' 'tis hard to conceive how they can be said to *abuse* Scripture who *follow* it to their Power; yet, since you will have it allow'd you *gratis*, Does not their pretended *miserable Abuse* of Scripture consist in misinterpreting it? Certainly, you must say it does. And if so, then your *right Interpretation* of it, or your taking it in *a right sense*, is that in which *your right Use* of it consists: wherefore your own Interpretation of it, is, beyond all Evasion, that which differences you from them; and so 'tis your *peculiar* or *specifical* Rule of Faith. 3. Do those Hereticks who thus *miserably abuse* it, do this out of Wilfulness, that is, do they *indeed* understand it right, but *pretend* they do not; or do they use their *endeavour* to *understand* it, and yet *hap* to abuse it by misunderstanding it? If the former, then again you must tell us *gratis*, and ought to make it out to an Indifferent man seeking for Faith, that the *Socinians* (and all the erring Sects) are the most wickedly insincere, and the most blasphemous men in the World, nay, the greatest Hypocrites to boot; to know certainly by Scripture that Christ is God, and yet knowingly impugn his Divinity, voluntarily abuse Scripture they seem so highly to venerate, and pretend Conscience all the while: And yet none but you have such horrid apprehensions of them: and as for my self, seeing how they

they decline no Adversary at the alledging and comparing Places, how sedulously they make Scripture their Study, and in all appearance adhere to the Letter; I verily believe they *follow it to their power*, but fall into Errour through their misfortune of espousing a wrong *Rule*. And if you still say they are thus voluntarily insincere, I desire to know of you by what outward signs can an indifferent man judge *You* and your Party are not as Insincere as *They*, or perhaps *more?* Acquaint us, I say, for what other Reason you say this, but because they frame another *Sense* of Scripture than you do, that is, *interpret* it differently from You? If you can give no other than your own *Interpretation* is the only Light you have to judge them Hereticks, or to determine what's *Heresie*; and by consequence to judge what's True *Faith*; and so 'tis unavoidably your *Rule of Faith*, of which more by and by. But, if you say they *follow* it to their power, and yet err *in Faith*, then the fault not being in *Them*, for *not following* their Rule, their fault must be (as it is yours) their *adhering* to a *Rule* which secures not men, tho' doing their best to understand it, from falling into Heresie; that is, it consists in their pitching upon that for their Rule, which is indeed *no Rule* at all.

54. Your Rule then equally patronizing true Faith and Heresie, I had reason to affirm, that it inferr'd those *blasphemous* Propositions, as *to make Light and Darkness very consistent, and Christ and* Belial *very good Friends*. Now, this being my Charge, it was manifestly your Duty to shew it does not patronize true Faith and Heresie, and by doing so, induce those horrid blasphemies; and to make out, that only true Faith can be grounded on *Scripture privately interpreted*; and therefore, that I had impeach'd it wrongfully. But this was too hard a Point to meddle with. Instead of doing this, and clearing your self from Blasphemy, which

was

thus directly incumbent on you, you tell the Reader, with a great garb of Gravity, that I speak *Blasphemy* my self, *Blasphemy* against *God* and his *Holy Word*; when I only mention it while I am charging you with it. And hereupon, like a right Good man, you fall to talk *Godly*, and out of your pure Charity will needs bestow upon me the Benediction of your *hearty Prayers, that God would give me Repentance unto Life.* Indeed, had I said that *Christ* and *Belial* could ever be *reconcil'd*, or advanc'd any Position that imply'd it, as yours does, I confess, I must have been Guilty of a horrid *Blasphemy*. But, not knowing how to clear your self, for owning no Rule but such a one as equally patronizes Truth and Falshood, and therefore, by a necessary consequence, infers those Blasphemies; you very demurely put on a Godly Countenance, and betake your self very charitably to *your* hearty *Prayers*. As much as to say, *for good Truth, Sir, I cannot answer you, nor shew I have any Rule, but what serves for Errour as well as Truth; but yet if that may excuse me, I will be content in lieu of it, to pray for you with all my Heart.* Is not this pleasant?

55. Thus much for your *Rule* as 'tis *common* to You and all Hereticks. What's your *particular* Rule? Here

P. 28. 1. You take it ill that we will needs know what's your Rule better than your selves do; And we take it as ill of You, that you would have us believe *you* before our own Evident Reason. We know you cannot *defend* such an insignificant Rule as your own Interpretations; and therefore are forc'd to *disown* it, when we press you to give a good account of it; with which may very well consist, that you *pretend* upon it when the danger is remote. 2. You assure us *Plain Scripture* is *your Rule*;

Ibid. that is, (as appears by your Discourse here) *your* Rule as you are such a kind of Protestant. Pray, will you ex-

explain and unriddle to us this most obscure word [*Plain*] in what kind of Points, to whom, and by what kind of Light, is Scripture taken as your Rule, *Plain*? And let's have something more than a blind Word to work on. Experience tells us Scripture is not *plain*, even in the highest Points of Faith, since so many *follow it*, and yet go astray. Again, if it be so *plain*, all your *useful Helps* are *needless*; and Lastly, Scripture conceiv'd by you to be *plain*, which is your *particular Rule*, can never be made out to be *Absolutely Certain*; for the *Socinians* too proceed upon Scripture, *Plain to them*, as their Rule, and yet *err*; which evinces 'tis not so plain as to convince and certainly enlighten Human Reason attending to it: An evident Argument, that both the one and the other do but fancy it *plain*, but that, in reality, 'tis Plain to *neither*. 3. You declare, that *the Interpretation of it by any Sect of people, Romanists or others, is Extrinsical to it, and no constitutive difference of it.* That *the Interpretation of Romanists* is not the *particular Rule* of *Your Protestants*, all the World knew before; which makes it frivolous to tell us so here. Nor do we challenge you, or pretend, that the Interpretation of *any other Sect* is your Rule; for we told you, that the Interpretation of *each* Sect, respectively, was its *particular Rule*. 'Tis *your own* Interpretation we said was your Rule; instead of granting or denying which, you shuffle about, and talk of the Interpretation of *Romanists*, and other Sects. But, if (which is strangely expresst) in *other Sects* you include your *own* too, 'tis all one to my Discourse. For, whether you regard the Interpretation of your *own* Sect, or make account, that as each individual Angel is a distinct *Species*, so each individual Interpreter among you is a distinct *Sect*, still Scripture, as *interpretable by your selves*, is your particular Rule, and not Extrinsical to it. For let me ask you once more, Is not the *Sense* P. 28.

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of Scripture your *Faith*; and, Is not that Essentially your *Particular Rule of Faith*, that gives you your *Particular Faith*? and, Must I mind you again, that it is the very Essence (as I may say) or nature of *Interpretation* to give you the *Sense* of the Words of Scripture, which in our case is your *Faith*. Wriggle then still which way you please, you can never avoid, but your *own Interpretation of Scripture* is your *Particular Rule*; taking you either for a whole Sect, an Individual, or Both.

56. At length, as a man in danger when he is follow'd close at the Heels, and ready to be caught, takes a desperate leap, tho' he hazards himself a mischief; you venture boldly to declare what is your particular Rule, *as differenced from both* Romanists, *and other Hereticks and Sectaries*; viz. *Scripture plainly delivering a Sense own'd and declar'd by the Primitive Church of Christ in the Three Creeds, Four First General Councils, and Harmony of the Fathers.* After which you add, *This, I hope, is plain dealing, and no wriggling; and here we take up our stand, let him endeavour to draw us whither he can.* Never fear it, Sir, you are out of danger of being *drawn* any whither. Ten thousand Cart-Ropes will not go round you, and we must be at least Twenty Years in fastening them. But let's examin this your particular Rule. 1. I ask, whether, since Differences use to be *Essential*, these words, [*own'd and declar'd by the Primitive Church*, &c.] which are found in the Difference of your Rule from that of others, be at all *Essential*, or not: If *not Essential*, since, if you be Orthodox, you ought to have a *Rule* essentially distinct from that of Hereticks and Sectaries, what is this Essentially-different Rule of yours; for 'tis this we are enquiring after? If you say *'tis Essential*; then Scripture had not all the due power to regulate you as to your Faith, without their additional Light: And, by consequence, Scripture

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is not your *Only* and *Intire* Rule, as you ever pretended hitherto; ſince *theſe* are *Part* of it. 2 When you ſay your Rule is Scripture, plainly delivering a Senſe, &c. I ſuppoſe you muſt mean *ſuch a particular Senſe* as is *of Faith* with you: and can any more be requir'd to your *particular* Rule than *Scripture plainly delivering your particular Faith*? Certainly you will not ſay it. For, there is the *Divine Authority* in the Scripture, which is the Formal Motive of *Divine Faith*. There is *Plainneſs*, which gives it a *Directive* Vertue, and qualifies it for a *Rule*; and the Clear Light of this *plain Rule* muſt ſhine bright upon the particular Tenets you hold, for 'tis to ſhine there, and no where elſe. Which once put, what can all the other, eſteem'd by you but Human Authorities, ſerve for? Can they add *weight* to the Divine Authority, or *clear* that to us which is already ſo *plain* by Scripture? 3. Pray be candid, and tell us, After a thing is *plain in Scripture*, are you to value a ſtraw, what either *Primitive Church*, *Creeds*, or *Fathers* ſay? I dare ſay you will grant you are not. Wherefore, all theſe are utterly uſeleſs, unleſs they be pretended to give you ſome light to *interpret* Scripture. But this cannot be neither; both becauſe you tell us here *plain Scripture is your Rule*, and it would not be *plain*, but *obſcure*, if it needed an *Explainer*: Beſides, you put this as a *conſtitutive difference* of your *Rule*, and yet deny'd that any *Interpretation* of Scripture is ſuch, but *Extrinſical* to it. 'Tis then a great Myſtery ſtill, how theſe Human Authorities affect your General Rule, or influence your Faith already had by *plain Scripture*, or to what end they ſerve but for a Show only. 4. The *Lutherans* proceed upon all theſe as much as you, and yet hold a *Reall* Preſence of Chriſt's *very* Body in the Sacrament, as much as we do. So that *this* does not difference you in your Grounds or Rule from all

other Sects; for ſure you will not deny *that* to be a Sect, that holds an Errour, which Dr. *St.* has taken ſuch pains to prove is *Idolatry*. My laſt queſtion ſhall be, Whether your *ſober Enquirers* are not to come to their *particular Faith*, by this their *particular Rule of Faith*? And, ſince 'tis Evident they muſt, we would know next how many of them are to arrive at any Faith at all? For it will take up many Years to examin and compare all the *Fathers*, and be ſure of their *Harmony* with one another, and with the Scripture too. Nay, the Duration of the World will be too ſhort to compaſs that Satisfaction, if we may believe the * Biſhop of *Downs*, who aſſures us, That out of the Fathers ſucceeding the Primitive Times, *both ſides eternally and inconfutably ſhall bring Sayings for themſelves reſpectively*. Can any man living make Senſe of ſuch ſtuff, or ever come at his Faith by ſuch a Rule?

* Diſſuaſive from Popery, P. 7.

57. For this laſt Reaſon chiefly, I affirm'd, That not one Proteſtant in a million follow'd Dr. *St*'s Rule, but honeſtly follow'd the Tradition of their own Church, Paſtours or Fathers; that is, believ'd as they had been *educated*. To the firſt part of this Aſſertion you ſay little, but that if there be any Fault, 'tis the Fault of *the People only*. But if this *peculiar Rule* of yours, which takes in the ſeeing your Senſe of Scripture *own'd and declar'd by the Primitive Church, Four firſt General Councils, and the Harmony of the Fathers*, be to be followed e're you can come at your Faith; I doubt the Fault will prove to be in the *Rule*. For very few Perſons have Learning, fewer Leiſure enough, and none of them ſecurity of having any Faith by this Method; unleſs you could enſure their Salvation by inſpiring thoſe who are ignorant with competent Learning to underſtand *all the Fathers* and their *Harmony*; and withal, by letting them good long Leaſes of their Lives; which I

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am of opinion you cannot. The ſecond part, that they follow'd the Method of Tradition, puts you in a marvellous jocund humour; and, as if you had forgot your way (a thing not unuſual with you) you ask, all amaz'd, *Where are we now? In the Church of* Rome *e're we are aware of it: We are all good* Roman-Catholicks *on a ſudden, we are become an Infallible Church, &c.* and away you run with the Jeſt, laughing and giggling as if you had found a Mare's Neſt. Surceaſe your fears, good Sir, you are not a jot the nearer being Catholicks for following *your* own Tradition. It reaches no farther than *John Calvin, Martin Luther*, or ſome ſuch Reforming Heroe; and there it ends and ſtops in a flat *Novelty*. Whereas Catholicks abhor a Tradition that has any known Beginning, or takes a Name from any Particular Author, or has any Original but Chriſt, his Apoſtles, and the Church in the very firſt Age, who were the Original Deliverers of it to the next, and ſo to the ſucceeding ones. Pray Sir, what's become of your Jeſt? All I ſaid, was, that *You* **followed the Way of Tradition, however miſplac'd*; I prov'd it by Reaſons and Inſtances; you hint ſome, omit others, and pervert the reſt. You tell us, 'tis all *Scriptural Tradition*. But we will truſt our Eyes and Experience before your bare Word. We ſee ſome taught before they can read; we ſee them Catechiz'd in Churches, and they repeat and believe what's there told them, tho' Scripture be not quoted for the diſtinct Paſſages. We ſee them read the Scripture afterwards; but we ſee withal not One in Thouſands truſts his own Judgment of *Diſcretion* for the ſenſe of it; but, without reluctancy or jealouſie, accepts that which his Paſtours aſſign to it; eſpecially in Spiritual Points, or Myſteries of Faith, about which we are chiefly diſcourſing. But do not your ſelf incline to admit (as much as we can expect from a man that affects not too much

* First Letter, p. 27. l. 3, 4.

[illegible] that very thing you so laugh at [illegible] [illegible] *Rule of Faith, in order to make choice of their Faith*, [illegible] This you answer with *hums* and *habs*: *Tho' I fear* [illegible] *yet I hope he is out in his Account — I am apt to think they are more attentive — Let be it, as he would have it, &c.*

P. 29. Now, since they must either have their Faith by Reliance on their Pastours and Preachers, delivering it to them and educating them in it, that is, by some kind of *Tradition*; or else by relying on *Scripture*; * and your self seems to doubt, or rather in a manner grants it, That they have it not the *later way*; you must at least *doubt* that they have it by *the Way of Tradition*. But your Fancy was so big with your empty Jest, that you had forgot what you had allow'd but a little before.

* Ibid.

58. Thus, Sir, I have trac'd you punctually step by step; not (as is your constant use) pickt out a few words scatter'd here and there: which you thought you might must commodiously pervert: wherefore I have reason to expect the same exact measure from you. The Sum of your Answer is manifestly this. Shuffles and wilful Mistakes without number; Evasions endless; Falsifications frequent; Godly Talk frivolous; Jests groundless; and all these brought in still to stop Gaps when your Reason was *Nonplust*. Be pleas'd to leave off your Affected Insincerities; otherwise I must be forc't to Expose them yet farther; than which there can be no Task more Ungrateful imposed upon

Your Servant,

J. S.

ERRATA. Page 3. l. 28. Read *both of us*; p. 10. l. ult. *find it in*. p. 11. l. 11. *unless there*. p. 21. l. 24. *go forwards*. p. 22. l. 27. *Secret. Again*. p. 23. l. 9. *as I had not*. p. 32. l. 30. *It is a Way*. Ibid. l. 32. *upon it?* p. [illegible] *Reason is, Shuffle*. p. [illegible] l. 17. *Stiff*. p. 44. l. 4. *Gift*. Ibid. l. [illegible] p. 46. l. 7. *it*. [illegible] p. 48. l. 17. *[illegible]*. p. 53. l. 12. *[illegible]*. p. [illegible] *to be as a loss*. Ibid. l. ult. *discover'd it*. p. 60. l. 8. *Speculators*. p. [illegible] *not so explicitly on*. p. 63. l. 28. *formally bad*. p. 73. l. 13. *other*, [illegible]